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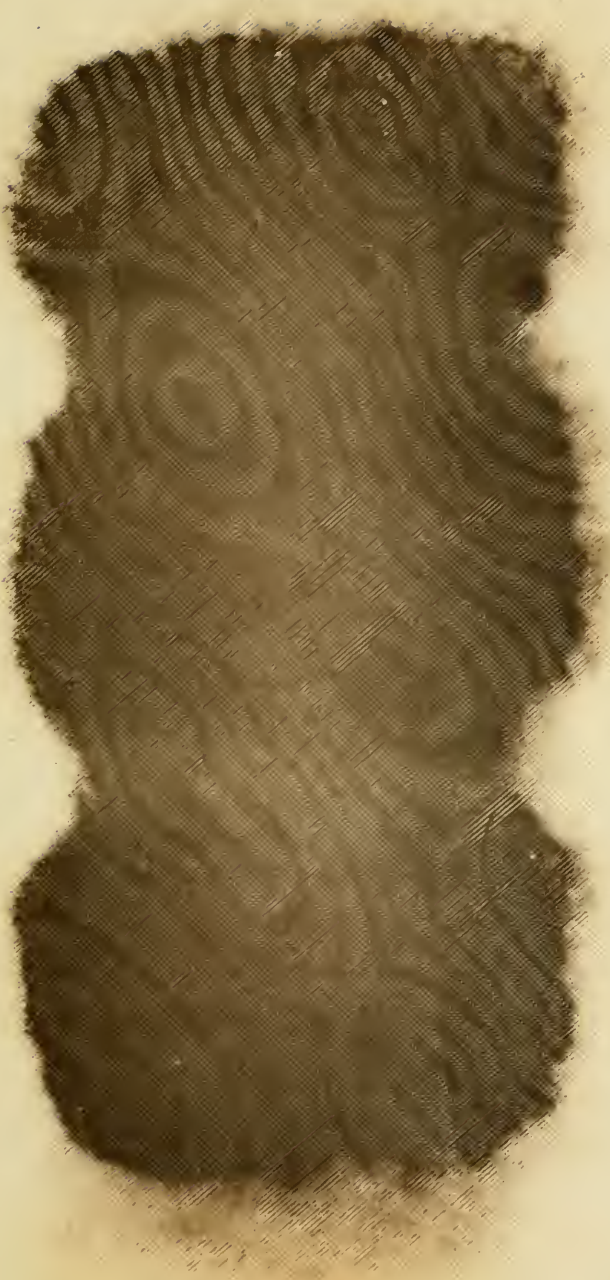

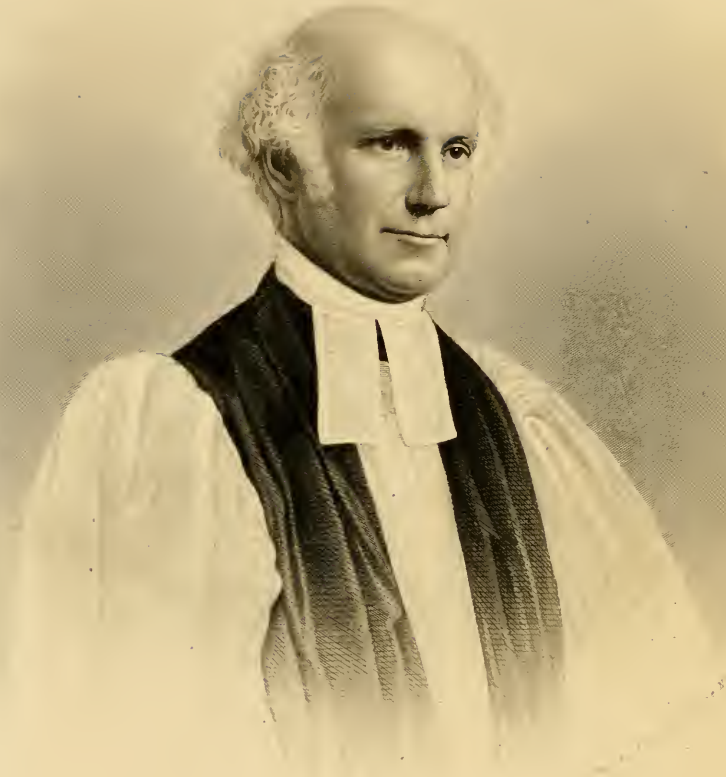

Chas. P. McIlvaine

FEB 8 1954

THE

UNION PULPIT.

A COLLECTION OF SERMONS BY MINISTERS OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS.

"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."—*Augustine.*

FIRST EDITION.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
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FOR THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON, D. C.
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PREFACE.

This volume, containing the productions of some among the most gifted, pious, and distinguished clergymen in the United States, and adorned with faithful and elegantly engraved likenesses of the authors, is published under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association of Washington city, in the full confidence that its character and merits will insure for it a favorable reception and a general circulation. The *names* of those who have prepared the following discourses are sufficient guaranty of their excellence. They represent various evangelical denominations, and every section of the country; and this work, the result of such a rare combination of talent and piety, will not only constitute a valuable addition to our national literature, but also it is believed tend materially to advance *Christian Union*, and prove, through the blessing of God on the truths which it contains, the means of great spiritual benefit.

But while we feel that the work, in itself, justly claims approbation and patronage, we trust that the *object* to which the proceeds of its sale are to be applied, will still more entitle it to the aid of Christians

and philanthropists throughout our land, in promoting its circulation.

This object, so generously advanced by the eminent divines who have furnished these sermons, is to enable the Young Men's Christian Association of Washington to provide, at this centre of political and social influence, a suitable hall, commodious, attractive, and accessible, with a library, reading room, and other appliances for social, intellectual, and spiritual improvement, worthy of the city and of the Christian and moral sentiment of the whole nation. Since the organization of the Association, in 1852, these objects have been steadily kept in view, and to a limited extent accomplished. We have now a library of 3,000 volumes, of standard secular and religious literature, with a good supply of periodicals and newspapers in our reading room, which is the only one in the city. Our funds, however, have mainly been required for more active benevolent efforts, and we have not been able to secure an endowment, or a suitable building for our purposes. Every year, in adding to our opportunities for usefulness, has extended our plans for the promotion of the cause of Christ; and while we deplore our past inefficiency and failures, we still feel assured that the Association has been a blessing to the community, and has had continued indications of Divine favor as well as of public approbation and confidence.

We occupy a peculiar field, and the circumstances in which we are placed entitle us to the consideration of the citizens of all parts of our country. We must labor and plan not only for our permanent

population, but also for the multitudes that continually repair to the Capital of the Union, from motives of profit, pleasure, ambition, or in the service of the Government. Of this large class, only a small proportion identify themselves with our churches, or, even if professors of religion, make themselves known here as Christians; while many become engrossed by the absorbing interest of political excitement, the fascinations of fashionable life, or the seductions of worldly amusements and evil associations. The *young men* who come from their homes in the various States, are especially in danger from these allurements; and to throw safeguards around them, to introduce them to good companions, to churches and Sunday schools, and to enlist them in active Christian and benevolent labors, are special and prominent objects of our organization.

Young Men's Christian Associations, though of recent origin, have already become a powerful instrumentality, noble in design, simple in method, and efficient in operation. They have united Christians of every name in fellowship of spirit and in concert of action, without interfering with denominational preferences or obligations, and in their operations have aimed to avoid suspicion of any substitution for the *church*, while they develop the talents and activity of the laity, and endeavor to induce all to render cheerful service in the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom. They have provided for the wants of the poor, for the education of the ignorant and the neglected, the relief of the sick and dying, the diffusion of the Gospel in jails, asylums, and sim-

ilar institutions, the introduction of strangers to suitable homes, the employment of the destitute, and the advancement of all that can ennoble man's character.

The extensive sale which we confidently trust this work may have, will materially aid us to accomplish these important purposes. Every effort has been made to secure the highest literary and artistic excellence in its publication, and we fully commend it to public consideration.

JOSEPH H. BRADLEY, Jun.,
M. H. MILLER,
R. T. MORSELL,
HENRY BEARD,
J. HALL MOORE,
T. J. MAGRUDER,
WILLIAM J. RHEES,
Committee on behalf of the Association.

ROOMS OF THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,
WASHINGTON, D. C., *May*, 1860.

INTRODUCTION.

Had one stood by and listened to the prayer of the Saviour for the unity of His people upon earth, as it first fell from His lips, possibly the reflection might have immediately arisen, How singular, if not unnecessary, is this petition! Can the followers of Christ ever be otherwise than one people, bearing the same likeness, manifesting the same spirit, cherishing the same views, maintaining the same doctrines, actuated by the same motives, engaged in the same work, and sharing the same reward? But had He chosen for His stand-point centuries after, when the Reformation had caused a breach in the colossal structure of the Romish ecclesiasticism, and men's thoughts began to be free from the despotism of a thousand years, or during the succeeding periods, when opinions newly quickened were clashing, and the din of controversy might be heard on all sides, like the roar of waters long fast, but now rushing into the channels which had suddenly been thrown open—as the vision of all this passed before him, then possibly the very opposite reflection might have been suggested, How idle, if not impossible, is this petition! Can these apparently sundered and fragmentary portions be ever united, so that they may have an essential oneness in the midst of much that seems so diverse, and even antagonistic? Yet neither of these reflections corresponds with the design or the verification of the language of

Christ, and the history of His cause among men shows that both alike are erroneous.

The lesson which God has taught His people, through all these changing aspects and fortunes of the church, is, first of all, that Christ in God and God in Christ is, and is to be acknowledged as the supreme HEAD of the church, both in heaven and on earth; and then, by a series of inevitable consequences, that the Word of God is the only standard of ecclesiastical authority, and the sole rule of faith and practice—that the truth of God is the instrument of the spiritual dispensation which now extends over the world—that the power of the church, whether in her offices or her ordinances, can be no greater and no other than is sanctioned by the canons of the one divinely-inspired volume, known and accepted as the Bible—that the traditions of men and the decrees of councils are of no validity to bind the conscience, beyond a clear warrant obviously contained or properly deduced from the book of Revelation—that there may be catholicity of spirit, with diversity of creeds, in things subordinate—that unity may exist without uniformity, and uniformity without unity—that there may be "separation without schism, and schism without separation"—that the metaphysics of philosophy and the assumptions of hierarchal power are no part of the essential oneness of the church—that the long dominion and usurpation of the anti-Christian Governments rest alone upon the assumptions of a permitted train of events in providence, and not upon any *jure divino* disclosed in the Word of God—that the true test of what have been opprobriously styled the heretical sects is their submission to or rejection of the doctrines of salvation contained in the sacred Scriptures, and not their adherence to any supposable lineal successions of men exclusively appropriated to one body or another—that whatever company of believers sincerely and unqualifiedly accept the canon of inspiration, do in fact constitute a living and essential portion of Christ's universal church on earth—and that, what-

ever agency or combination shall be devoted to the promotion of the aims of a practical Christianity, founded purely upon the instructions of the Old Testament and the New, is within the scope of the divine covenant and favor, and may lawfully expect to share in the divine blessing. These lessons have been gradually unfolded, till now the principles they illustrate and impress have become, in a large degree, familiar to the mind of the evangelical Christian world. At the time of the Reformation, the main energies of that great movement were called out to resist, and, as far as possible, to overthrow, the hoary errors and superstitions which had been growing in their strength and mischief for many centuries. It was not to be expected that the influence of so vast a reign of bigotry and intolerance could, at a single stride, be left totally behind. Accordingly, as the different parties of the common uprising emerged from the shadows of the past, they bore with them, into their new positions and relations, something of that severity and bitterness which had been running in the veins of thirty generations. It has taken the last three hundred years of polemical strife to define the opinions of men upon the important but yet not vital questions which enter into the circle of religious truth and practice, and to establish and confirm the basis of mutual toleration and repose. And though this work has not to this day been wholly accomplished, yet a vast progress has been made. The great line of Christian co-operation and heart-felt sympathy, in all endeavors to promote the common good of mankind upon evangelical principles, has been reached. Men have found that, notwithstanding their theological and ecclesiastical differences, and while they are paying a cordial allegiance to the standards and polity of their own denominational organization, they can, at the same time, lay their hearts and their heads together upon the altar of their common service and obedience to Christ for the blessing of the whole world.

The more positive evidences of this advancement in the

unity for which Christ prayed began to be exhibited in modern forms more than half a century ago, in the foundation of the great parental Bible societies of British and American Christians, and the numerous auxiliary or kindred associations in various parts of the world. Attending or following these establishments, the missionary spirit rose, with a fresh impulse, in almost every portion of the evangelical church; and this again, both at home and abroad, gave birth to new forms of Christian beneficence, or served to quicken the energies of institutions already in existence. Thus sprang up, in progress of time, the wide and glorious circle of evangelical establishments which adorn the civilization of the present century, and shed their benignant light over the family of man. Through the operation of these great foundations, a most happy effect has been produced; and during the last twenty years, much of the asperity which characterized the former contests of the denominations has been abated; prejudices have been worn away; heated disputes concerning the doctrines and polity of the church have, in a great degree, been pretermitted. Men of all parties, throughout the Protestant world, are beginning to discover a more excellent way; and while loyalty to the system of their choice, and fidelity to the principles involved in it, have neither been invaded nor impaired, they have been coming gradually to a common conviction that they are one in the great essentials of our glorious Christianity, and that it is in this peculiar mode of the divine providence that the prayer of our Lord is to be wisely and graciously accomplished.

But during the period already indicated, perhaps nothing has transpired in the Christian world which seems to have more clearly proved at once the fruit and exemplification of this spirit of Christian union than the rise of that series of beneficent organizations which are now known as the Confederations of the Young Men's Christian Associations throughout the length and breadth of Christendom.

Whether they be regarded in the suddenness of their advent, the rapidity of their expansion, the simplicity of their construction, the desideratum they satisfy, the work they are accomplishing, and the almost unparalleled success of their efforts, we may, in view of them, well exclaim, in delighted and grateful wonder, "What hath God wrought!"

Twenty years ago, nothing like them existed, or had ever existed, in the world. But, in the ripeness of time, they seem to have appeared, as at the call of God, full-grown, equipped, and instinct with the spirit of Christian unity, as the very life-pulse of their existence. And though but a few years have elapsed since their disclosure in this country, the last Annual Report of the American Confederation conveys the gratifying intelligence of the existence of two hundred and five of these associations, scattered in every section of the land, and embracing an aggregate membership of twenty-five thousand young men. A similar progress has been made in Europe, and in other regions of the globe. If, then, we consider the local position of these Christian institutions, in the very heart of the great centres of population in the seaboard cities and inland towns—or the refuge they provide and the attractions they extend over the whole community of their own class, in their spacious halls, furnished reading rooms, and growing libraries—or the missionary work they are doing among the poorer and more-neglected portions of the people, the destitute children and the unfortunate outcasts of our municipalities—or the employment they make of all the other instrumentalities for elevating and evangelizing the society in the midst of which they are planted—or the benignant influence they throw around strangers and sojourners coming among them under all the constraints and disabilities of ignorance and want of acquaintance or association—or the barriers which they interpose to guard the inexperienced and tempted against dangers that might soon destroy—or the mutual action and reaction of their prayers

and sympathies and experience, both in stimulating to renewed exertions, and in guiding to the methods of a riper and a larger wisdom—or the total absence of everything like sectarian principles, views, and feelings, which has thus far marked their development—or the noble and world-wide reciprocity and correspondence which the various associations throughout the world sustain with one another: what human thought can measure such a power as this for doing good, what Christian heart can fail to appreciate it as an instance of one of the nearest approximations to the perfection of Christian unity now existing in the world.

It is not, indeed, too much to say, that these associations, from their very nature and composition, embrace the flower of the Christian church at the present day, and that they have hitherto been conducted, not only with the vigor and vitality peculiar to the period of early manhood, but, as a general rule, with a prudence and discretion that might do credit to the very ripest age and wisdom of the church. The fears of some have been dispelled, and the objections of others have been refuted, by their steady, onward course, pursuing the legitimate objects of their own sphere, and careful not to trench on the functions and prerogatives which belong to others. In this manner, they have already attained a most hopeful and commanding position, and are favored of God to look out upon a prospect of unexampled future good and glory.

The Association of this city was among the earliest formed in America, and, with humble gratitude to God, it is to be recorded, that though by no means so large in numbers or external endowments as some of its sister associations, it has from the first enjoyed the confidence and Christian regards of the whole Confederation, and, by a constant faith in the objects of its existence, and a patient and persevering series of efforts, it has been enabled to bear no inconsiderable part in accomplishing at home the work it was designed to perform, maintaining its place in the sympathies of the Christian public around it, and also

in bringing to its present condition of prominence and usefulness the National Confederation. In the darkest days, it has never faltered; and when perplexity has stood full upon it, God has raised up friends to succor it; and it has risen above all discouragements, stronger and more resolute than ever.

The field which this Association occupies, being in the Federal Metropolis of the country, is found to be one of singular importance and of peculiar trial. For though the city of its operations cannot compare, either in wealth or population, with many other leading towns throughout the Republic, yet it is, and must of necessity be, the resort of all classes of the people, from every quarter of our own land, and, in fact, from every nation on the globe. If, then, it be considered what elements are brought together here, what influences are continually at work, what interests are at stake, and what opportunities are thrown open to the operation of such an agency as that which the Association presents, it will be exceedingly difficult to compute the importance of its position, or the necessity of sustaining it. But the very fact that so many are sojourners, having no local ties and no sense of social responsibility like those which belong to permanent residents—that, with a population at the present time of some 65,000 souls, there are but comparatively few of what may be termed the wealthy class, while the manifold and constant drafts upon Christian charity, in every form of application, absorb the resources to which it might otherwise look for assistance, must make it obvious, at a single glance, that the difficulties of the Association are by no means insignificant. And when to this it is added, that its labors must be carried on in the midst of the most intense fashionable and political excitements, and in the face of that peculiar fascination of worldliness which is to be found nowhere but in civil Metropolitan life, it will be seen that all the inherent difficulties of such a work must be greatly enhanced and aggravated.

Yet, notwithstanding these considerations, the gracious

hand of God has been upon this enterprise; and an amount of good has already been accomplished, which, it may justly be said, no earthly line can measure, and which may be regarded as the presage of still better and greater things to come. Therefore, in full confidence of hope, and in prayerful reliance upon that providence which has prospered them hitherto, the Association, in casting about for new methods of exemplifying the spirit of Christianity by which they have been animated from the first, as well as for new channels of influence and usefulness, to be superadded to, but not to interfere with, those already employed, have undertaken to secure the material from prominent and well-known clergymen of the different evangelical denominations throughout the country, and to prepare and publish a volume from the same, as a kind of first fruit in this department of united Christian labor. It is believed that in this way the Association may contribute something to the interest and elevation of the Union Christian literature of the times, thereby dispensing also a noble gratification and a substantial spiritual profit to many hundreds, and they would fain hope thousands, of their Christian brethren, in every portion of the land. Should the circulation of this volume inure in any measure to the pecuniary profit of the Association, or tend to produce a fund, it is their purpose sacredly to apply it in a manner still further to increase their facilities for doing good, and to plant themselves upon a higher platform of Christian fidelity and efficiency. Looking, therefore, to the great Head of the Church, in whose cause and for whose sake this enterprise has been undertaken, and commending to the acceptance of their Christian brethren, of every name, both far and near, this, their first offering to the sacred literature and the Christian Union of the age, they send it forth, believing that it may be owned and prospered of God, to the conferring of ceaseless blessings upon many souls, in time and in eternity.

WILLIAM T. SMITHSON.

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THE TENDER MERCY OF GOD.

BY RIGHT REV. C. P. McILVAINE,
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF OHIO.

Why will ye die?—*Ezekiel*, xxxiii, 11.

Such was the solemn appeal of the mercy and patience of God to those whom the prophet Ezekiel was sent to turn, if possible, from their evil ways. It was preceded by these remarkable words: "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways." And then comes the question, so difficult for a sinner to answer, after hearing such a declaration from God, "*Why will ye die?*"

Now, there is no sense in this question, if the death alluded to be only that death of which it is written, "*It is appointed unto men once to die.*" With that, our will has nothing to do, except to escape its sting. The difference between the sinner saved and the sinner lost, in regard to such death, is, that while it must come with equal certainty on both, it comes to the first deprived of its sting, because his sin is pardoned; while to the second it is all sting and terror, since it seals the state of his soul under unpardoned sin and its condemnation forever. To the first, death is as the passage of the Jordan to the people, Israel—a flood that must be crossed, but a flood divided. It is the passage out of the wilderness to Canaan; the Christian, by that path, goes home to God.

There is what the Scriptures call "*the second death.*" "He that overcometh (saith the Lord) shall not be hurt of the second death." (*Rev.*, ii, 11.) This, we may all escape. All the mercy of God ex-

horts us to escape it. It was to open the way of escape, that "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." What is that second death? We answer, by asking what is the first death appointed to all? You answer, it is *dissolution*. Yes, but dissolution of what? Of the body, in itself, among its own constituent parts? No. The heart ceases to beat, while there may as yet be no dissolution of the bodily parts. The machine still holds together, but it is dead. What, then, has been dissolved? You easily answer, the connection of *the soul* with that body. The body thus dead is a machine without a power—a house without an inhabitant. You do not mean that the soul departed is not still living, nor that the body forsaken is not still a human body, but that the connection of that body and that spirit is dissolved, whatever each, in its separate state, may now be. Hence the people of God, who are now emphatically "*alive for evermore*," having attained to the blessedness of "the saints in light," are called in Scripture "*the dead*." They are "absent from the body." That separation is the first death.

But what is *the second?* *Separation* again—*dissolution*, and that forever and ever. The soul, being immaterial, admits of no dissolution within itself. It cannot lose its natural life. Its intellectual existence is immortal. But it is not such existence that receives the emphatic name of *life* in the Scriptures. There, life and bliss are synonymous. "Eternal *life*" is the simple designation of the heavenly state. "*A river of water of life*" is the beautiful image of abounding, satisfying, endless bliss. The Scriptures do not qualify the word *life*, as applied to the future state, by calling it happy or unhappy life; as if true life could be else than true happiness. To say that a soul departed inherits *life*, is in the Bible to say that its inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and full of glory. The question then comes, what is the soul's happiness? and the answer is at hand—GOD! The favor, the peace, the love, the communion, of God—nothing else, nothing less! And what, then, is the soul's true life? The answer is at hand—GOD! "*In his favor is life.*" God is Light; God is Love; God is Life. That Infinite Spirit is to our souls *spiritual* life, just as this finite spirit is to my body its *natural* life. Separation from God is spiritual death. Separation from God forever, in the misery of hell, is eternal death—the second death; *excommunication* of the soul from God forever—that separation which shall be consummated and sealed when those words shall be

heard from the throne, "*Depart*, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"—the sinner, with all his sinful passions and powers remaining, deserted of God, left to himself, to his own emptiness and his own sinfulness, a prey to his own passions and conscience and self-condemnation and vigorous intellect—capacities so large, and nothing to fill them—wants so incessant, so importunate, so raging, and not a hope of anything ever to satisfy them; and this, under the superadded infliction of the positive wrath of God. Oh! that will be death, indeed; and *that* is the death about which the question is asked in the text, "*Why will ye die?*" And it is about that, brethren, that we desire now, affectionately, to speak with you.

We are here amidst the privileges of the Gospel. Our day of grace, our time to save our souls, is fast hastening away. The first death is near. I speak to a great many who are not prepared to meet it—neglecters of the great salvation of Christ, their hearts far away from God. Their present way of life is directly towards that second death. To them, nearness to the grave is just so much nearness to the condition of the lost. God's long-suffering is all that keeps them out of that woe. They are not in the ark. Its door is wide open for their entrance; they heed it not. The Word of God comes to them, saying, "*Why will ye die?*" Friends and brethren, will ye consider that question? Will you follow me, while I endeavor to assist you in its answer?

I. First, then, I am sure that, if ye do thus perish, it will not be in any degree chargeable on any deficiency in the mercy of God! How solemnly is that declared in the words which precede our text! "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." God vindicates Himself from the possibility of the loss of a soul being ever laid to His charge. He has no pleasure in such loss. In the strongest possible mode, He seals that declaration. He swears by Himself—"*As I live, saith the Lord God.*" On the contrary, His most earnest will is, that sinners should live. True, He desires not they should live, except they "*turn*"—that is, except they forsake sin and embrace His service. That would be to dishonor Himself without blessing them. He desires their repentance, as not only essential to life, but as a part of the life itself. Not to turn to Him, is not to live. That they may turn and live, He does desire, with an earnestness and compassion of which the whole Gospel, and all the

history of Redemption, and all the experience of His people, and all His wonderful patience with impenitent sinners, are the impressive evidence. Think what God has done to make it consistent with His holiness and justice, and the honor of His government, to save you from your sins. Behold the Lamb of God! Consider Him in His Eternal Godhead; consider Him in His deep humiliation when He came in the nature of man; consider Him in the sacrifice for which He took that nature—in his sufferings and death when He was made a curse for us! Why such a sacrifice? Why that agony, which clouded the heavens at noonday, because the heavens had never looked upon such agony before? It was the awful payment of God for your redemption. It was God's wonderful grace, toiling, in the greatness of its strength and the wonder of its love, to open a way by which you might turn unto Him and live. It was God writing, in the blood of that great propitiation, the declaration of our text, "*As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*"

But we lead you to another view of the same emphatic truth. In the second Epistle of Peter, there is a prediction that, in the latter days, there would arise "*scoffers,*" scoffing at the promise of the coming of the Lord to judge the world, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming, for all things continue as they were from the beginning?" Because they could see no signs indicating the changes to accompany that awful day, they would infer that its promise would fail. But the Apostle gives another reason. The promise of that awful day is only delayed, not forgotten. And why delayed? The Apostle answers: "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Thus the flood was determined in the days of Noah. It was certainly to come. The Patriarch was sent to warn the world that they might repent before it came and took them all away. But many long years yet elapsed, and all things continued as they had been. No signs appeared of such a judgment approaching. Doubtless there were scoffers then, who set it down to the failure of the promise. But the Scriptures tell us it was only "the long-suffering of God" which "*waited in the days of Noah.*" So does that same long-suffering of God wait in these days, that sinners "may come to repentance." And such is God's own account of the present delay of that great and awful judgment, when all that are unholy must be unholy still, and all that are without the ark of peace must so remain excommunicate forever.

Each day, each hour, of the continuance of this ungodly world is simply a gift of the forbearance of God. It is the impressive evidence of His declaration, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn unto Me and live."

But, my friends, if it be "the mere long-suffering of God" towards a sinful world that explains the delay of its destruction, what else explains the fact that each of you, who are not God's servants, giving no heed to his ways, and denying him your hearts, are not cut down? Why do you yet live? Why were you raised up from the borders of the grave, when once you were there? Why is your day of grace lengthened out? Is not the condemnation of a broken law already upon you? Why, then, is its execution delayed? Have you not sinned enough to merit the wrath of God? Has not the barren fig-tree been barren long enough in God's vineyard, in spite of all that has been done for it, to make it worthy to be accounted a cumberer of the ground, and to be cut down and cast into the fire? Why, then, is it allowed still to stand, and why is it still plied with efforts to make it fruitful? There is but one answer. My dear friend, you are not forever lost, you are spared as yet, simply because God is long-suffering towards you. And could you see, as He sees, how you have treated that long-suffering, you would intensely wonder that it could have borne with you so long. Your whole continuance of life—every hour of it, in your present impenitence and disobedience—is just the strong attestation that God desires not your death, but *does desire your salvation*. And thus we are sure that, if you do finally perish, there will be no ground to charge it, in any degree, upon the compassion of God, as if there were any failure there. The responsibility will be all your own. You will have none to reproach but yourself.

II. Let me add, that if you finally perish, it will not be because you have not had presented to you every warning, every affectionate invitation, every powerful and exalted motive, which ought to persuade a rational being to turn unto God and live. "The wages of sin is death; the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ." There is a world of motive and persuasion and warning in those few words. Can you conceive of anything that ought to weigh with man, and govern his life, if the solemn truths therein uttered should not? Sin's awful wages; God's great gift! And when it is considered how you have had those wages of death and that gift of life placed

before you in every form of awfulness and of preciousness, of solemnity and of tenderness, of God's entreating and persuading, of a Saviour's love beseeching and exhorting, line upon line—persuading you, waiting for you, wrestling with you—the heavens bowed, that God may come near to you, to receive you when you turn; His providence added to His written Word, for the stronger argument; afflictions sent to show you the emptiness of the world and the desolation of your state, that your eyes might be opened to your need of the hope set before you in Christ; oh, when we ask what more could infinite wisdom, and goodness, and compassion, do for you, to turn your minds and hearts to God, you must be ready to testify, that if you die, it must be in spite of all that should have moved and persuaded a rational being.

III. *Why will ye die?* We have said it will not be for want of inducement. We now add, it will not be for want of *conviction.*

No doubt, among those whom I am now particularly addressing, there are many degrees of light, of impression, and of belief, from the man who has scarcely any religious creed at all, to him whose belief of the truth almost persuades him to yield himself to its government. But, in all this variety, I doubt if there is the man who does not know, and in his conscience acknowledge, that were he to follow the path, not only of the highest obligation, but of the surest wisdom and happiness, he would live a devoted follower of Christ. Ah! under many an exterior of indifference, and even of professed unbelief, where it would seem as if a serious thought of God could never dwell, how often is a voice heard, in the secret of the soul, saying, Alas, how poor the man that is not at peace with God! The true Christian! what a precious hope is his! A dear and venerable friend of mine* once told me that he was walking with the celebrated mathematician, Hutton, who was an infidel, when they passed a dog, and the unbeliever exclaimed, "Would I were that dog!" Thoughts of a judgment to come, however denied, haunted him. Much more do careless men, who know that if the Gospel be true they are without hope, when they see a consistent Christian going on his way to death and eternity in the enjoyment of his glorious hope, and enduring the trials of the present life, uplifted by the expectation of the heavenly inheritance, often wish they were such as he. Oh! no, my friends,

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*The late Olinthus Gregory, LL. D., of England.

should you die that second death, and the question be asked you, amid your hopeless sorrows and woe, *why you died?*—why, when there had been such salvation offered, and such a Saviour to flee to, and such warnings and invitations from God to persuade you?—you will not answer that it was because you needed conviction of the incomparable wisdom of being a follower of Christ.

IV. Nor will it be, with some at least, that there was never a season in your present life when you were so far moved by the claims and interests of religion as to suppose the time of your becoming the true followers of Christ would some day arrive, and that all you wanted was a little more time to advance in feelings and impressions which you thought would finally ripen into the reality of godliness. I am not delivering what I know by the private history of any of you. I am speaking from a general knowledge and observation. Are there none here who, although their present state affords no promise of any growth in grace, can tell of times, under the solemn dealings of the Word of God with their souls—when perhaps they had been brought low in sickness, and seemed near to death—or when some other afflicting providence had softened their hearts, and drawn a curtain of darkness over all their earthly hopes, and had written vanity wherever they looked—and when it seemed to them that a lesson had been taught which they could never forget, and impressions received which they could never lose, so that they felt assured they would go on from that time to get more weaned from the world, more drawn to God, and before long would confess Christ before men? Alas! how little they knew of their own hearts! Who can trust to the permanency of such impressions, unless they seek, in watchfulness and prayer, their protection and renewal. Little did they suppose with what power old habits of worldliness and indifference would struggle to regain their old mastery, as soon as health should return, or the wounds made by affliction should heal. Where now are those impressions? What improvement has been made of those precious influences of the Spirit of God upon their hearts? Have they gone on since, as they once expected, getting nearer and nearer the Kingdom? Is it not now more difficult than ever to arouse them to make effort for their salvation? What deafness, what blindness, what indifference, is this that has now possession of them, after what they were once made to see and realize? Ah! you may perish in this state; and by and by, voices will be heard in the home of the lost, saying

with unutterable lamentation, "*the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved;*" and those voices may be yours—*your* "weeping and wailing." But when you shall say, in that bitterness of despair, *why did we die?* you will bear your testimony that it was not because the Spirit of God did never strive with your hearts, to lead you to the salvation of Christ, nor because He did not make on your minds impressions which but for your neglect would have ripened into life eternal. The mercy of God will not have to bear the blame of your being tormented in that flame.

And now we ask again, "*Why will ye die?*" And we answer by stating what is operating upon you directly towards that result.

1. *A latent, insidious unbelief*—I say unbelief, not *infidelity;* for the latter expresses a state of mind more positive and settled than such as I am speaking of. We mean an unbelief so secret that it may have hardly ever recognised itself, afraid to call itself by its proper name, and ready indignantly to disown every approach to what you call infidelity. Allow me to illustrate by putting a question. When the Word of God is faithfully declared to you from the pulpit, and you hear of the only way of salvation, and what must be your everlasting heritage if you are not found therein, and when you know that what you hear is just the plain testimony of the Bible, does there not arise in your minds such thoughts as these: "What if all should prove untrue? Perhaps, after all, there may be no such penalty, or no need of such a method of escape. God desires not our death, and may He not at last be willing to save us, whether we turn unto Him or not?" Such thoughts may be in your minds only as a timid, latent suggestion, pretending to no evidence, and which dare not stand out and be examined; but, nevertheless, do you not *entertain* them? Have they not their influence? Is not their insidious whisper a magic spell, that turns away in a great degree the force of the solemn appeals of the Word of God, and keeps your mind at ease in your impenitence? Do you not *allow* and *cherish* such thoughts, because of their poor consolation, while you never examine them, because you fear to test their real worth?

We apprehend there is much of this state of mind in our congregations—an underground, unformed, stealthy, whispering unbelief; which does not positively deny, but insinuates a doubting question, when it dare not venture an open denial; which has no aim at the discovery of truth, but simply to keep the mind at ease under the

troublesome dealings of the truth. A great deal of the inefficacy of the preaching of the Gospel is to be accounted for by this paralyzing influence.

2. Another cause that answers the question, *why will ye die?* is found in the *grievous want of serious consideration.*

When you have an important earthly interest at stake, you consider, you examine, you would be afraid to risk a decision without mature consideration. But how is it when the matter in question is not earthly, but heavenly; not for a year, but for everlasting; your souls at stake, and the decision lying between such issues as the endless peace of God and His endless wrath? Oh! when do you consider so little; what interest are you so averse to considering at all; what subject is dismissed from your thoughts so hastily; on what question of welfare are you so easily persuaded to believe that all will go well? A sermon listened to on Sunday; a few scattered recollections that there is a God, and a soul, and death, and eternity; a few languid expectations of some time or other attending more earnestly to these things—and *that* is *all!* No earnest endeavor solemnly to realize your state, your duty, your prospect, your danger, your sin, what is coming, and how little you can count on what a day may bring forth, with all the motives with which the mercy of God should move your hearts! Oh, how wonderful! But is it wonderful that the Word of God has so little power, when it is so little considered? Will it be at all wonderful if in this way you should never come to repentance, but die just as you are, *out of Christ*—no matter how open the door of that ark, all the while you were here, or how loudly the warning and invitations of the grace of God may have been always sounded in your ears?

3. I might go on to give more reasons, such as the foregoing, which, in case you die the second death, will help you to say *why you died.* But there is one which lies at the bottom of all, and, when told, tells all; and with this we conclude. It is found in the words preceding the text: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that *he turn unto Me* and live. *Turn ye, turn ye,* for why will ye die." That "*turn ye,*" so inseparably connected with escape from that death; that certainty that, however God desires not your death, you cannot live, except you *turn unto Him;* and then your so well knowing that to turn unto God means no mere incidental outside change, but a revolution of your whole inward life; not the mere

formal obedience or religious ceremonial, but a turning in heart, in habitual affections, in renouncing inward sin, inward worldliness, with all that keeps you from holiness of heart; yes, the knowledge that the whole basis of the Christian character is in such turning—*this* it is which answers the question, *why you will die*. Take away that essential union of turning unto God now, and living *with* God hereafter and forever; convince men that they could be saved without it, by only conforming themselves to some mere ceremonial service, added to a decent moral life, then how wide the way of salvation, and how easy to persuade men to go in thereat, and not die! What makes the gate of life so straight, and the way so narrow, what accounts for it that so few there be that go in thereat, is the simple necessity of such a conversion of heart, such an inward religion of holiness, such an inward and spiritual reality of life, above the world, and sustained by daily grace from Christ, obtained by daily prayer of heart. All this explains the phenomenon that so many *will* die. It is this that accounts for all that strange unwillingness to consider, of which we spoke—and all that strong disposition to put off the service of God, while its absolute necessity is fully acknowledged; this it is that accounts for the various excuses which men invent to keep themselves at ease in their sins, the earnestness with which such excuses are held, and the infatuation which would fain believe them to have some justifying importance. But what shall *we* do, who are sent with the messages of God? Shall we apologize for this great necessity? Shall we attempt a compromise between the sinner's heart and the requirements of God? Shall we hide or diminish what His Word declares you must do to be saved? Shall we conceal that between the will of the sinner and the holy will of God there is such essential opposition, an opposition which accounts for all this vast procession of immortal souls going down to the second death, when God desires not their death, and when such a Saviour and such salvation is provided for them? Oh! no; that opposition of the sinner's will to the will and ways of God is one of the great truths we have to publish. It shows how far that spiritual death, of which the second death is but a consummation, has already the dominion. It shows how great the spiritual change which your hearts need, and how earnestly you should seek the power of God to make it. It is exactly what the Saviour declared to precisely such hearts: "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life." Ye

will not! Man's *will* is the difficulty. There is a strong controversy between the will of the unrenewed heart and the will of God. One or the other must give way, if you are ever to be saved. And which shall it be? Shall God repent, or man? Shall God surrender His law, which pronounces that without holiness no man shall see His face; or will man give up his aversion to holiness, and seek it of the Holy Spirit of God? The whole responsibility is with yourselves. *You* must decide whether to be saved or lost. All things are ready on God's part, only waiting the readiness on your part; God's importunate calls and entreaties are sounding in your ears: "Turn ye, turn ye." "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." Nothing can be more earnest, more compassionate, more encouraging. It is a voice from the very fountain of life and the very throne of grace. It is the tender love of Jesus, now exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, and saying to every poor sinner, *come to Me—I will give you rest.* Oh! my friend, how all the interests of an immortal soul, how all the solemnities of a judgment day, how all that is terrible in the condition of a soul lost forever—how the whole preciousness of the peace and salvation that is in Christ Jesus—how all are at this moment assembled about you, and pleading that you will hear, and turn, and live!

God's mercy will meet you, as soon as your hearts shall seek Him. The hand of His grace will be ready to help you, as soon as you in your weakness shall be ready to take it. There was once a poor, wandering, beggared sinner, who had been awakened to a sense of his guilt and wretchedness and folly. He thought of the servants in his father's house whence he had wandered, and compared his condition with theirs. He came to a stand—he resolved to return. "*I will go to my father.*" It was a great way he had to go, for he had gone "into a far country;" but, far as it was, he was resolved he *would* turn and go to his father. No doubt he expected to encounter a stern, offended father, who would bring up all his guilt against him, and be exceeding cold and distant to him; and the best he expected to get, by repentance and entreaty, was to be allowed to take the place of a "hired servant." To be taken back as a son, he had no idea even of asking. He set out on his journey. And "when

he was yet a great way off," (saith the Scripture,) his father saw him. Yes! For he was on the watch, patiently, unweariedly, looking out for the return of his son. Now at last he saw him coming—as yet a great way off—all miserable, degraded, beggared, and guilty. And he ran to meet that repenting son—"he had compassion on him, and fell on his neck and kissed him"—and the son, scarce able to speak, says: "Father, I have sinned—I am not worthy to be called thy son." The father looks not at his unworthiness, but his repentance—he has turned unto me, he shall be my son. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;" and let there be joy in all my house—"for this my son was dead, and is alive again—was lost, and is found." So is there joy in heaven, with God and all the angels of God, when one sinner repenteth. Such is the Gospel! So does the compassion of God come out to meet, to embrace, to take by the hand, to help, to comfort, to accept and save, any and every soul of man that will so turn unto God, seeking His mercy by the one only way, the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ. What a wonderful declaration of grace is that—"I WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON." Mark its connection—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for He will *abundantly pardon*." "Where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound," through Jesus Christ. Do we wonder at a pardon that is so abounding and so free, that though our sins be as scarlet, they are washed away as white as snow, as soon as with a broken spirit we make the righteousness of Chirst our refuge? The answer is: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Such is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; such its open door; such its full and free salvation; so does it wait to bless you; so does it entreat you to come and live. Oh! *why then will ye die?* All this grace rejected; all of it, because rejected, so fearfully increasing your guilt, and the bitterness of your cup, and "the terror of the Lord." It will be a fearful thing for them of Sodom to appear before the judgment seat of God. But it will be more tolerable for them, nevertheless, than for us, who have a Gospel which they had not, if that Gospel be not obeyed, if its grace be not accepted.

D R Campbell

THE GLORY OF CHRIST, THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.

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To me to live is Christ.—*Philippians*, i, 21.

Were Christians to live the life enjoined in the Scriptures, they would doubtless still be "a wonder to many," "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Their relations, their duties, their aims, their plans, and their spirit, as there depicted, are so out of the ordinary course of things, as to stand in striking contrast with those of the rest of mankind. Subjects of a Kingdom, whose supreme power is over the heart, whose first principle is self-renunciation, whose reigning spirit is love, whose steady aim is conquest, whose principal weapon is truth, and whose best hopes all centre in another world, they present a strange anomaly to the unrenewed world around them.

Just such an anomaly, however, Christians are designed to be. They are to be in the world, but not of it. By their example and exertions, they are to seek to enlighten, to reclaim, and to save it. Under just conceptions of the new and heavenly life of which they have themselves been made the subjects, acts of obedient gratitude are to mark their career during the whole period of their earthly existence. The glory of Christ in the conquest of the world, by its subjection to the principles and spirit which so happily control and bless themselves, becomes an object of such earnest and absorbing desire, as to give sobriety and naturalness to the language of my text, as the appropriate language of every true Christian.

The glory of Christ, the Christian's life, is the theme, to the consideration of which we invite attention.

I. In the first place, we invite attention to the grounds on which Christians make the glory of Christ their life. To make the

glory of Christ one's life, in its widest scriptural sense, is the same as to live supremely for His honor in advancing His cause in the world. For thus living, Christians have the strongest reasons. Their devotion to Christ is not blind; their services are not superstitious; their sacrifices proceed not from the mere lashings of conscience. The whole of their religion proceeds on principles of reason and gratitude, and is, in all its details, a most "reasonable service."

That their very being is derived and dependent, is a conception so intuitive and distinct as to become an authoritative conviction of their minds. Equally distinct and authoritative is the additional and inseparable conviction, that such beings owe the perpetual honor and services of the whole of the powers of their bodies and minds to their Creator and Preserver. Christians distinctly and joyously recognise the claims set up for Christ, in the Scriptures, on this score. They apprehend, as no others can, such declarations as these: "All things were created by Him;" "by Him all things consist;" all things were created "for Him." The realization of the relations and obligations involved in such inspired statements is peculiarly congenial to their renewed inclinations, and, consequently, they delight to dwell upon them, and to render the appropriate returns in lives of becoming consecration.

At this point, the delight of Christians becomes greatly enhanced by the contemplation of the wonderful powers and adaptations with which Christ, as their Creator, has endowed them. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made." A glance at his mental capacities will evince this. Conceive of his power of thought, by which the perfections and the ways of the Eternal become his daily study—his power of perception, by which, through the appointed portals of his physical habitation, he contemplates nature, and attempts to trace and delineate nature's God—his power of imagination, by which there is not a point in space or duration, or an object in the universe, which is absolutely beyond the range of his mighty sweep—his power of memory, by which he can incorporate the recorded past with his own living present—his power of reasoning, by which he takes the material furnished by all the other powers, and renders it practically valuable amid life's necessities, present and future—his power of conscience, by which there is a something ever within him that ever speaks of God, of right and wrong, of accountability, and of retribution. Conceive, too, of his emotional nature—his power to feel, by

which he can admire, wonder, and adore, by which he can love, sympathize, or even sorrow. How much of life is made up of the sensibilities! Without such a nature, the intellect of an archangel would be a dreary and desolate possession. Add to all these his power of will, by which, under his perceptions and emotions, he goes forth, amid life's struggles, to grapple with the stern resistances of his lot, and to perform with success the diversified duties he owes to God and man. When all these constitutional endowments are contemplated, the conviction that they are from His creative hand, "by whom are all things," and "for whom are all things," constrains the Christian, from a feeling of conscious right and of profound gratitude, to place them all, with all their capabilities, on the altar of Christian duty. Christ's by creation and preservation, the feeling is imperative that they should all be held for Him, and be expended for His glory.

The disposition of Christians to consecrate all their powers to Christ, and make Him their life, is greatly strengthened by the contemplation of His own perfections. By the constitution of the human mind, we are made to admire and honor grandeur of intellect and of character. In Him, these exist in the most absolute perfection. All that we behold of finite grandeur or excellency is but a feeble emanation from Him, as its original and inexhaustible source. Is there sublimity or grandeur in the awful storm or desolating tempest? It is but the breath of His omnipotence. Is there cause for admiration in the statesmanship that adjusts the causes, and reduces to order the convulsions of nations? It but faintly images the omniscient wisdom of Him who ruleth the universe. Is there occasion for awe in the presence of that integrity that confronts unmoved the aggressions of national corruption? How feebly it represents the inflexible purity of Him who confronts and controls the corruptions of men and devils. Is there something really grand in the benevolence of Howard or Paul? What is it, when compared with His, whose inspired designation is "Love?" If grandeur of mere human intellect or character so attracts us, and involuntarily secures our homage, how can the enlightened Christian fail to delight in Him who is the embodiment and the source of every conceivable excellency and perfection!

But these perfections not only exist in Christ; they have all been generously exerted to furnish man with every blessing that cheers

his existence. How rich the canopy spread over our heads; how vitalizing the atmosphere around us; how fruitful the earth we occupy; how beautiful and cheerful is all nature; how complete our adaptation to our condition; how wise the laws imposed on us; how much happiness they secure; how much more they might secure; what checks they impose on vice; what encouragements they hold out to virtue; and what is all this but the arrangement of sovereign goodness, without our counsel or concurrence? All this is the creation and arrangement of Christ; by Him it all consists. How strong the appeal in favor of living to Him, which comes to the Christian from the consideration of what has been done for him in this point of view! Who can resist it?

But great and controlling as these several grounds are for living to Christ, there is another, which, with the Christian, far outweighs them all. It is the realized conception of the relation of redeemed and Redeemer, that truly fills the Christian soul with overwhelming and unutterable emotion. The conception that, but for the gracious interposition of Christ, his inevitable portion should be eternal death, oppresses him with a sense of profoundest obligation and gratitude. Sin had arrayed against him all the interests and all the power of the moral government of God. The character of the Divine Governor, the stability of the Divine throne, the majesty of the Divine law, the interests of all upright beings, the infinite demerit of sin—all demanded his consignment to everlasting perdition. From this, all the created resources of the universe could not deliver him. Facts show that even the Almighty himself could not deliver him but by the substitution unto death of an intelligent being of infinite dignity, whose sufferings, as a measure of moral government, would be of infinite value, and a full equivalent for the merited sufferings of the guilty. This is clearly demonstrated by the result of the feeling prayer of Him who was made the substitute. "O, my Father," said he, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The cup could be permitted to pass only on the condition that man should be left to bear his iniquity himself, and consequently to perish forever. If the Divine Father would save a single sinner, the Divine Son "must be lifted up" to make satisfaction in his stead, and to open the way for his salvation.

The emergency was awful. A world of immortal beings, through its successive generations, must eternally perish, or Christ, the only

begotten Son of God, must be the ransom. The price required was immense. Only the Infinite in humanity could furnish it. Exaction was made, and He became answerable. That He might save, the Father spared His own Son, neither "from suffering nor in suffering." "He laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Here, then, we have the ground above every other upon which Christians feel that they must make the glory of Christ their life. It is a ground which involves and gives force to every other; but above them all, it rises in moral grandeur, and appeals to the Christian with a moral power bordering on omnipotence. It points to hell, and says, See the pit whence thou art delivered. It points to heaven, and says, See the glory for which thou art designed. It points to his intellectual and moral endowments, and says, See what powers and susceptibilities have been preserved for thee. It points to the privileges and blessings of the spiritual life, and says, See what treasures and glory are secured for thee. It points to a perishing world, and says, See to what service thou art called. When the Christian thus contemplates the interposition and claims of Christ, the language of the Apostle becomes but the sober and appropriate expression of his own profound convictions. "We thus judge, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." And under this conviction, he finds it morally impossible to repress the truly Christian avowal, "To me to live is Christ."

II. We invite attention, in the second place, to the field in which Christians are designed to make the glory of Christ their life. A just apprehension of the relation of Christ to His people necessarily issues, as we have seen, in a desire to devote the whole of life to His honor. And the inquiry is natural, Where are Christians designed to secure this honor for Christ? The sphere is two-fold. Christians are obviously to labor for Christ, both in the church and in the world; and their duties are both personal and relative. These duties, moreover, present themselves in both a negative and positive form. Every man, even every Christian man, is the subject of evils, and liable to others, which must be eradicated and avoided, while he has positive wants which it must be the great business of his life to supply; and what every man may find to be true of himself, every Christian will find to be true, not only of himself, but of all others to whom he is related, and who have claims on his sympathies

and efforts in their behalf. He possesses a physical organism of exquisite Divine workmanship, through which he is appointed to carry on all his active intercourse with the world around him. This organism it is his imperative duty to preserve intact for all the purposes of its creation, during his stay in the present state. Unnecessary exposure to any occasions of physical injury, as violence, climate, intemperance, pollution, true Christianity absolutely forbids. On the contrary, it enjoins all due vigilance and exertion to cherish and preserve, as far as may be, a sound body for the comfort and the use of the spirit in its active efforts to serve Christ during this mortal life. The human spirit itself is also liable to great evils, originating in its depravity and the general depravity of the world. Envy, jealousy, hatred, malice, revenge, together with vanity, avarice, ambition, and discontent, are very serious evils in human nature, affecting the peace, the dignity, and the worth of the soul, and which no real Christian will neglect to eradicate and guard against. But the necessities of the spirit terminate not with the eradication of these evils; they demand positive culture. Its true interests require that it shall be practically wise; that it shall know how to mingle with others, without suffering from stolid stupidity on the one hand, or from rashness on the other. This is a matter for observation, for reflection, for watchfulness, and for prayer, which no Christian may overlook, and which all who anxiously desire to honor Christ will assiduously attend to. But the soul needs not practical sagacity only; it needs also, and must have, that higher culture called knowledge, or intelligence—the enlightenment and discipline of the intellect; the power of thought must be developed and strengthened. In this direction, there is no assignable limit to the exertions after knowledge due to the spirit. A still higher want, however, is communion, intimate and uninterrupted, with God. The evils inherent in the Christian, and the evils to which he is constantly exposed, affect more or less his spiritual frame of mind and his spiritual enjoyment. He often mourns an absent God. But even if the evils in question were removed, a constant, earnest, spiritual culture is indispensable to attain to a state of ultimate, habitual delight and happiness with God. What is here indicated as due from the Christian to himself, that he may reach the stature of "a perfect man," indicates, also, what every Christian should seek to aid in accomplishing in every other Christian, that all may reach "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge

of the Son of God." And here comes into view the importance, the duty, and the power, of Christian association, as a means of personal and relative religious culture, and of warding off the evils to which Christians are exposed in this life.

But we learn, also, that "the field is the world," and that Christ designs to subdue it to Himself through the instrumentality of Christians, whose agency, in their successive generations, is not to cease until "the Kingdom and the greatness of the Kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High." A glance at the moral condition of the world will tend to awaken just conceptions and sympathies, and to stimulate Christian exertions to recover it to Christ.

Look at Europe, the boasted glory of the whole earth, and what do you see? Almost its entire extent, with the exception of one small Kingdom, given up to the degradations of imposture, and to the dead formalities of a corrupted Christianity. There is not, at this moment, a city or town, there is not a village or hamlet or rural district, but needs the missionary of the Cross to teach the people the simple story of Jesus. Look at Asia, and what do you behold there? Here and there may be seen to flicker, in the midst of the gloom, and at unmeasured distances, a small taper, lit by the modern missionary, as if simply to intimate that the Gospel had just touched the borders of the habitation of nearly half the population of the globe. Look at Africa, and let Moffat, Livingstone, and others, say what is there. In one or two spots a feeble light, of recent origin, may be seen to twinkle, as if oppressed by the gloom; but over the main portion of that vast country broods, in an unbroken cloud, a blackness of darkness intenser far than that of the hue of its sable sons. Turn your eyes on your own boasted continent, and what meets you here? A mere patch is favored with a partial supply of the blessings of a pure Gospel. But, oh! what irreligion, what infidelity, what intemperance, what worldliness, what pollution, what moral ruin, are everywhere to be seen, yea even in our own midst. Look at the condition of many of our cities and towns, and at a very large portion of our Western Territories; and then look far away west and south of our own vast domain, and behold the moral wilderness spreading out beneath the tropical sun, and say, O say, how much land remains yet to be possessed by the saints, and in the name of the Most High! Verily, the world lieth in wickedness. Full nine-tenths of

its myriads of immortal inhabitants are at this moment "without God and without hope," "perishing for lack of knowledge."

Nor is the evil of their condition merely negative. Large numbers are positively arrayed against God and His revealed will, as atheists, skeptics, and infidels; other multitudes are the victims of maddened appetites and passions; and still other multitudes are degraded and fettered by the impostures of the false prophet and of the man of sin; while almost countless multitudes are brutalized under the superstitions of idolatry and the cruelties of barbarism. See how even the maternal heart, that seat of purest human affection, becomes petrified, so as to be able to bait the devouring crocodile with the tender, unsuspecting, often smiling, infant of her bosom. See how the filial heart, too, becomes so callous as to enable its possessor, without emotion, to fire the funeral pile, and tearlessly gaze on the last agonies of a burning widowed mother. And see, too, how the terror-stricken victim of conscious guilt has, under the lashings of conscience, offered "his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul." In the conflicts of appetite and reason, of passion and conscience, of conscious guilt and the terror of an angry but misinterpreted God, of infidelity and revelation, of superstition and true piety, nine-tenths of the world's arena is a vast scene of madness, with only reason and conscience enough to give accountability to the whole, and to indicate with unerring certainty the fearful doom to which life's drama is fast approaching, with the vast majority of the successive generations of men.

Such is this world at a glance. What would it be, could we comprehend the length and breadth, the height and depth, of its actual iniquity, its wretchedness, and its doom? It was under this vast conception, to us impossible, that the Father of Spirits was so moved as to give His only begotten Son to atone for its guilt, and to open a way for the exercise of mercy consistently with the integrity of his moral government. Under its influence, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin, that sinners might be made righteous. The same conception, also, moved the Son himself to lay down His life, that redemption might be had through His blood, that sinners might be brought unto God. The Holy Spirit acts under the same profound sympathy and purpose of mercy. His great work on earth is to secure for Jesus "the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession." Christ imparts the same noble

spirit and purpose to all His true followers, and employs them in the same gracious services, which engage the Father, the Spirit, and Himself. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," said He, "both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." Their agency is to extend into "all the world," and, through their instrumentality, the Gospel is to be preached "to every creature." How divine, how glorious, their vocation! They are appointed to labor to redeem a world from sin and death. What holy enthusiasm kindles in their souls, as they go forth to subdue the nations to Christ, and to "crown Him Lord of all." With what appropriate and heartfelt pathos can they set forth His excellency and His claims. Out of what depths of experience, and how true to life, can they depict the evils of sin. With what tenderness and sweetness of spirit can they dilate on the peace and the joy of faith, and on the hope of heaven; and if all be likely to fail, with what holy tears can they weep over and pray for their race, as the enemies of the Cross of Christ.

III. We invite attention, in the third and last place, to the spirit in which Christians should make the glory of Christ their life. There is always a liability to the undue manifestation of the wrongs to which our depravity gives rise in the conduct of the affairs of Christ's Kingdom. Christians may not forget that, while in this world, they have not yet attained—are not "already perfect." It is impossible for them but to find it too often true, that, when they "would do good, evil is present with them." The spirit or temper which Christians should exhibit in living professedly for Christ, becomes, then, a matter of grave importance. The real worth and efficacy of the Christian life essentially depend upon it—so much so, that it matters but little what else the Christian professor has, if he have not the proper temper. Being of "another spirit," his life is likely to be productive of more harm than good. Talent, position, opportunity, only increase the power of such a man to do evil. The spirit of a man is the most difficult part of his nature to conceal—it always protrudes, is ever present, and sure to make its own impression. It is therefore not only important, but imperative, that every Christian shall labor to possess "the spirit of Christ." No other is allowed or suitable. This is his great model, and should ever be his study.

Christians should especially cultivate and exhibit a spirit of dis-

interestedness in the service of Christ. Paul represents it as the great excellency of Timothy, that he supremely sought "the things which are Jesus Christ's." His injunction to the Christians at Corinth was: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare." To the Philippians he said: "Let each esteem other better than themselves." He spoke of Epaphroditus with high commendation, "because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply" a certain lack of service. Paul's own spirit, no mean model, may be learned from such expressions as these: "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." In these examples, we have "the mind" that was in Him who "came down from heaven, not to do" His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him; and who, in obedience to that will, "laid down His life for the sheep." How completely self is subordinated in that spirit, which it is the duty of every Christian to cultivate and to practice. Nothing else is compatible with his relations and obligations to Christ and to the souls of men. However it may be with others, he is to glorify Christ, not himself; to seek the things that are Christ's, not his own. In this lies the distinguishing excellency of his character, and, in a great measure, the power of his life.

On this subject, let each interrogate himself with candor. Do I possess this temper? Am I concious of its governing influence in my life? Does it underlie my plans? Does it regulate their execution? Can I appeal to the omniscient eye, and say, the love of Christ constraineth? Do I covet intelligence, position, and influence, that under this heavenly spirit I may the better advance the Kingdom of Christ? Oh, what excellence! How noble, how divine, the attainment! How it facilitates living to Christ!

Christians should also cultivate a spirit of dependence on Christ. To live for His glory is impossible, without the support of His divine arm. The Christian's strength is in the Most High, who has never for a moment suspended His own immediate superintendence in the progress of His cause. To His most holy and reliable servants He has never wholly committed His honor. He watches it with His own eye. He steadies and directs it with His own hand. Thus only

can its triumph be successfully secured. In living to Christ, Christians "live and move and have their being" in Himself. Their success is all owing to Him. True, He imparts to them no inspiration to render their counsel infallible or their decisions authoritative; but He does not leave them to themselves, nor His cause to their finite skill. In the economy of grace, Christ is made to the Christian wisdom, for every time of need—His presence is promised always. All the Divine perfections, the fullness of the Godhead, are pledged. It is, then, incumbent on the Christian to avail himself of all the Divine aid proffered him. He should never go forth in any great undertaking without the conviction that, with respect to it, he has "the mind of the Lord," and that in its conduct he has "the power of His might." Inconsideration and rashness may be the result of being unsent, and undue confidence in the arm of flesh is incompatible with that "wisdom which is profitable to direct," and which, when properly invoked, insures being "strong in the Lord." Even when the Christian has reason to believe that his plans are wise and his efforts in the right direction, he should go forth only in the strength of God; because it is only "through God" that the weapons of his warfare are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. No truth is more clearly taught in the Scriptures, than that "the increase" must ever be of God. Under the distinct apprehension of this truth, the Apostle said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Again, Christians should ever manifest a spirit of self-consuming ardor in the service of Christ. The complete sanctification of their own hearts, and the conquest of the world to Christ, is an undertaking of immense difficulty, as well as of immense importance. The intense sufferings of Christ, endured for the purpose of laying the foundation for it, sufficiently show the greatness of the difficulty as it lay in the mind of God. As co-workers with God, Christians need to drink deep into suffering, that they may know something of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and thus be prepared to endure the privations, the toils, and the sacrifices, which a life of enlightened zeal and ardor in the Divine life may be expected to encounter. The Apostle uttered no extravagance when he said: "I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." He simply gave utterance in another form to the ardent feelings

which burned in the bosom of Christ himself, when He said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." The glory of Christ in the redemption of man is the Christian's natural and legitimate passion. Who can limit its just intensity and earnestness for the recovery of a lost world? How intensely it must have burned in the heart of God, when "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." In that surrender, all the perfections of His nature were "kindled together" into the deepest compassion for the perishing. With what power must it have operated in the heart of Jesus in the garden and on the cross, where He gave full manifestation of "the travail of His soul."

The true Christian is in no danger of passing the bounds of propriety in the excitement of his emotions on this subject. What might be extravagance on any other, is here only sobriety. The half that is due cannot be felt or manifested. The Apostle could not mention the enemies of the cross without "even weeping." He tells us that he "travailed in birth" for perishing sinners; that their condition occasioned him "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart." David gave vent to his burdened feelings in "rivers of water" from his eyes. Jeremiah exclaimed, in the deep anguish of his soul, "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart, I cannot hold my peace." Jehovah himself says of wayward Ephraim, "I do earnestly remember him still, my bowels are troubled for him." Of the blessed Jesus it is written: "When He beheld the city, He wept over it."

Such ardor is not only becoming, it is highly beneficial; and is so no less to its subject than its object. It tends to consume the dross and tin of the Christian's own heart. It raises him above the level where vice usually tempts, and places him amid the sterner and higher realities of life. The temptations of idleness and of luxury belong not to the sphere in which it prompts him to move. It keeps him viewing man as immortal, yet in danger of eternal death. It stamps times and things with their proper estimate, and inflames with aspirations and desires which this world cannot satisfy. Nothing short of living to Christ supremely can gratify it while here, and nothing short of having Christ as its eternal portion can gratify it hereafter.

Sinus Parker

CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED,

THE EXCLUSIVE THEME OF THE PULPIT.

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For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.—1 *Corinthians*, ii, 2.

Fidelity to the Cross stands out prominently in the words and life of Paul. It is in relief upon every page of his writings and in every act of his history. Under all circumstances, he ever presents the same genuine Gospel front. No pressure from without, no promptings from within, warped him from this. Such pressure there was from one or both of these sources.

With natural endowment enough to enrich a hundred minds, improved by the most careful culture, and stored with the lettered attainments of the most celebrated masters, he may have felt strong temptation to depart from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus. He was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee." He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Judaism. We know how hard it was for his fellow Apostles, and for the early Jewish disciples, to divest themselves of the errors and prejudices of education. In Paul, this was not accomplished without struggles of soul of which the world has never heard.

And there were outward solicitations which appealed strongly to these points of attack within. Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. There was abundant clamor for compromise and adaptation. Many of the converts had given way. How strong the temptation to seek some modification by which the Jew might be disarmed and the Greek conciliated—some com-

mon ground upon which the Cross, stripped of its offence, might be planted! The Jew and the Greek were in Corinth. The Gospel would be sifted there. Whatever of offence it had would be felt to the utmost. There would be a demand for the law, and not for the Gospel; and men with itching ears, earnest for the wisdom of words, and not for the foolishness of preaching. There needed a determination against this multiform pressure. The text is it. *For I determined.* There is heroism in the resolve, and in the performance of it. No compromise with the Jew, none with the Greek, none with the world.

It is a bold condensation of the preacher's mission. Christ is all in all. The field is narrowed to Him. It is not more, nor is it less. But the condensation goes on, and greater compactness is given to the subject matter of preaching. "And Him crucified." This is Christ defined; not the historical Christ merely, as our example, and a martyr to the truth, but the crucified Christ as a sacrifice, and as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The atonement, as the great central and saving doctrine of the Gospel, is announced as that to which Paul avows his adhesion, and his determination to make it the exclusive subject of his ministry.

I. The import of this determination.

1. It is the language of Christian devotedness and ministerial consecration.

Applied to the Christian man, it looks to a thorough and devoted discipleship, in which the believer neither lives nor dies to himself. In a most important sense, every Christian, however obscure his position, should know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. As expressive of faithfulness to the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, as the only ground of salvation especially, and as the symbol of that crucified life which we are required to lead, it should be the heartfelt language of all believers. The atonement reaches to everything—to the air we breathe, to the ground we walk on, and to the entire life. God's claim upon the creature, the redeemed creature in particular, is an exhaustive one. No man is his own; he is bought with a price. Less is not required of the layman than the minister. The extent and the spirit of the consecration is the same in both, and differs only in the direction it takes, or in the manner of its manifestation. The same generous liberality, the same life of faith, and the same all-pervading spirituality, should characterize every child of God.

But whilst we insist upon an equal because an entire consecration in all Christians, there is such a difference as grows out of a distinction between the Christian man and the Christian minister. The minister is not a Christian man merely, nor can he put off the ministerial character at pleasure, and resolve himself back into the Christian man. If called of God to the ministry, and invested with the sacred office, there is a peculiar consecration demanded of him, which is not met in the Christian man. The extent may be the same, but it runs in different channels, and assumes a distinct and specific manifestation. Nor does the sole distinctive feature of ministerial character and office lie in the functions of the pulpit. There is a character and life which lie back of this, and which are as inseparable from the ministry as the functions of the pulpit. Whether in the pulpit or out of it, or if engaged in secular business, this character still cleaves to him who is called to preach the Gospel. The office, in its proper consecration, covers the entire life, embracing talents, time, and substance. Secular pursuits, as a necessity, and as a means to the fulfilment of the duties of the ministry, do not impair this consecration; but beyond this, and when followed from the usual incentives of secular enterprise, they come in violent collision with it. Paul did not compromise himself, nor fail in the resolve of the text, when he worked at his trade with Aquila and Priscilla, at Corinth, and when elsewhere, and on other occasions, his own hands ministered to his necessities. The apostle and the preacher were never lost in the tent-maker, but the last was made tributary to the prosecution of his mission as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Exclusive devotion to the ministry is necessary to the performance of its entire duties. Effectiveness in the pulpit, in general, requires much premeditation and study; and, besides, the duties of the pastorate are not less binding, nor are they scarcely less important, than those of the pulpit.

Insisting as we do that the determination of the text applies to the ministry outside of the pulpit, we are prepared to admit that its prominent application is to the subject matter of exposition in the more immediate business of preaching. It looks to a consecrated pulpit, the great mission of which is to unfold the doctrine of the atonement, and to urge it upon the acceptance of a ruined world. This is the distinctive burden of preaching, and it is here that the determination of the Apostle bears with all its weight.

2. Christ, and Him crucified, is to be the exclusive subject of preaching in the sense of eminence. "A man of one book" was the motto of Wesley, and it should be the motto of every evangelical preacher. Paul's resolution amounts to this, when he declares, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." But the Bible, as our text-book, is a mine of varied riches. It is fruitful of the rarest historical knowledge. Almost every science can gather treasures from its contents, and every art can draw embellishment from its pages. The poet finds in it that which quickens and elevates his muse, the orator's lips are kindled by its eloquence, and the philosopher is indebted to it for his noblest conceptions. The incidental wealth of the Bible, in many of the departments of knowledge and philosophy, is greater than all the discoveries and productions of uninspired mind.

More nearly related to evangelical truth are numerous doctrines and precepts of inspiration, of the highest importance to man, and not to be overlooked by him who expounds the Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." All the words of God, all the thoughts of God, are precious. Every jot and tittle is to be studied, and made to contribute to the stores of the well-instructed scribe in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But whilst the whole canon of revelation is laid open in the sacred desk, the atonement, in peerless eminence, is to take precedence of every other topic. Subordinate features in the scene there are; but this, like the high mountains of the earth's altitudes, towers above them all. This eminence the Cross has in the Word of God, and the faithful minister will study to give it the same relative position in his exhibitions of the truth. Christ is in no sense to constitute the background of a sermon. Moses and Elias may be on either hand, but Christ should ever be the central thought, which, like a transfigured presence, permeates and subordinates everything around it.

3. The atonement, in the sense of comprehensiveness, and as exhaustive of Divine revelation, is the exclusive theme of the pulpit.

This doctrine struggles for utterance in the earliest pages of inspiration. Through all dispensations of religion to man, it is the

ever-growing subject of a progressive and gradual revelation. The Christology of the Old Testament is that of the New, in its germ. It is the Gospel in the blade and in the stalk, but not the full corn in the ear. The history, biographies, manifestations, and ceremonies, of the past, were the swaddling bands of an immature Christianity. The entire sacrificial economy of Patriarchal and Levitical times proclaimed Christ crucified. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," "and Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The atonement is the Gospel. It is the Gospel brought to a focus. Moses Stuart calls it "the point of points." In it we have all that the Gospel is, and from this centre an entire exposition of the Gospel is reached, so that a full explication of Christ crucified embraces the whole circle of revealed truth. Paul did not fail to declare the whole counsel of God, but, he says, "We preach Christ crucified." In the Gospels and Epistles, this doctrine is the main current which runs through them—sometimes profoundly hid from the careless reader, but ever and anon rising to the surface, and sweeping on with resistless power and subduing pathos.

Christ, and Him crucified, brings out the clear and harmonious statement of the prominent doctrines of the Christian system. All that is fundamental in the Gospel is exhibited in the Cross. In connection with it, the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly and powerfully vindicated. One God in a three-fold distinction of persons is unequivocally affirmed in the atonement, so that the high significance of the one is lost without the admission of the other. The personal distinction of the Father and Son is made in the sacrifice which the latter offers and the former accepts; and the Holy Ghost is revealed, as distinct from either, in the offices which he sustains to the work of redemption. We think that a careful consideration of the subject will result in the conclusion that the doctrine of the Trinity keeps pace in clearness with that of the atonement, and that its completest disclosure is made in fellowship with it. The Trinity is a positive and everlasting truth, but the necessity of its announcement does not appear, apart from the plan of salvation and the work of redemption. But for the remedial intervention which the fall of man called for, it might have remained among the secret things which belong to God, rather than, as now, amongst the things which are revealed, and which belong to us and our children. Consistency and reason

demand that the atonement, in its high evangelical import as a vicarious and expiatory sacrifice, be held in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity. They stand or fall together. Where one is denied, the other is rejected. All low and imperfect views of Christ are necessarily Unitarian, because such views strip the Trinity at once of its necessity and of its most comprehensive argument.

There is, indeed, an affinity of logical relation and consequence which obtains between the atonement and the subordinate but fundamental doctrines of our theology, none of which can be held in harmony and security apart from that which is the centre of them all. Where else do we read more clearly the lost condition of men, than in the tragic exhibition of Calvary? Where else are the issues of human destiny more fearfully portrayed? "If one died for all, then were all dead." Thus the doctrine of Christ crucified implies the original birth sin of our race. The remedy provided at such an inconceivable cost is in fact the most overwhelming statement of the disease. Jesus exclaims, in the final hour, "Now is the judgment of this world." If the Cross is a wonderful exhibition of Divine love, so is it also a most unequivocal declaration of human depravity and peril.

The atonement is the only foundation upon which a scriptural or reasonable theodicy can be built. In it the character of God is presented in the perfection of every attribute. Truth, wisdom, power, justice, love, shine undimmed. The great problem, how God can be just, and at the same time the justifier of the ungodly, is solved. Here, mercy and truth embrace. The sinning creature is saved, and the offended Creator is reconciled. The guilty and condemned are restored to favor, and the majesty of the Divine government is upheld. Were it necessary, and did time permit, we might at least glance at those difficulties concerning the original creation and the subsequent fall of man, which are by some supposed to embarrass our theology, and show that evangelical Arminianism is capable of dissipating them, so far as they are properly theological. A right conception of the atonement is the starting-point of doctrinal inquiry and exegesis, and it will be found that most damaging heresies arise just where this right conception is departed from. Those systems which limit the atonement, and those which make it alike unlimited and unconditional, prove and illustrate the position. The former, by the dark reserve of decree and preterition which is hid behind

the free tender of mercy in Christ, rob the Cross of its glory; and the latter, by unwarranted license, impeach the justice and tarnish the holiness of God.

If the atonement is exhaustive of Christian doctrines, it is also an exhibition of the will of God. The Gospel is the perfect law of liberty. As the rule of life, it is to us all that the law is to angels, and all that it was to Adam. It is not the ground of salvation, but it is the rule of Christian life. The severity and purity of the law is more deeply unfolded in the Gospel than anywhere else, and its claims are attested with thrilling emphasis in the death of Jesus. The comprehensive appeal of God to a perishing world is made in the Cross. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Would we call men to repentance, and persuade them to faith, this is the life-giving message. If you would feed the flock of God, "this is the true bread which came down from Heaven." If you would raise the Christian life to a loftier denial and spirituality, "the love of Christ which constraineth us" is the sure basis of such an appeal.

4. Christ crucified becomes the pulpit's only theme when it is recognised as vitally related to the whole of Divine revelation, and when the Word of God is altogether apprehended and expounded as the truth as it is in Jesus.

The mediatorial idea is broad and sublime, but it is without harmony or power when the kingly and prophetical offices of Christ are considered apart from their relations to the priesthood. The centre of the mediatorial idea is the priesthood, and the other offices are subordinate and complementary to it. Any presentation of Christ which does not set forth this vital relation which the priesthood sustains to the regal and prophetical offices, must be regarded as capitally defective. It would be a one-sided Gospel at best, and, although dignified as the preaching of Christ, it could not claim to be the preaching of Christ, and Him crucified.

The law as the subject of the pulpit should be held up in its proper connection with the Gospel. A sermon upon this subject, in which Christ is not presented as the end of the law for righteousness, is little less than a monstrous pulpit barbarity. The law, proclaimed in its baldness, and as divorced from the Gospel, divests the pulpit of its evangelical character. It may be the Christianity of

Moses and of David's time, but it is not the Christianity of Christ and His Apostles. The topic which cannot be brought into near connection with the atonement, has no legitimate place in the sermon. Whether we deal with man's depravity or with Heaven's mercy, whether we speak of God as a consuming fire or as the Saviour of all men, whether we portray the flames of perdition or expatiate upon that life and immortality which are brought to light through the Gospel, the atonement must be recognised in its vital relation to them all. Whatever these are in themselves, they are not living and felt truths until seen in their relation to the Cross of Christ.

It is then as the eminent, comprehensive, and vital truth of Divine revelation, that we are shut up to Christ, and Him crucified, as the subject of preaching. We have aimed to show that in the Apostle's determination there is no lack of breadth and fullness, and that it is not the cramped and narrow view of the special pleader. Christ is the text, of which the Gospel and all the pages of inspiration are the splendid amplification. What this determination excludes, is left to be implied or inferred from those general principles which have been but partially and imperfectly stated.

II. Reasons of this determination.

1. Found in the Divine call and commission to preach the Gospel. The minister is called of God. This call is effected by the agency of the Holy Ghost, directly moving those whom God has selected for His work, and is distinct from the work of regeneration, sanctification, and adoption. The preacher's commission is given in the Gospel, and in the words of Jesus to the Apostles. The call is to fulfil the commission, and the commission is a limited and specific one: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Paul's commission to the Gentiles was, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in me." As ambassadors for Christ, God hath "committed to us the Word of reconciliation." "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." So distinctly was this commission limited, that Paul unequivocally declares, "for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel; not with the wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Now, the drift of

these Scriptures, and many others of like import, is, that the commission is limited to Christ, as the ground of reconciliation between God and man, and that the minister has no warrant for preaching anything else.

To go beyond this special instruction is not only a violation of the ordination vows, but it is directly opposed to the letter and spirit of the Divine commission. Where the mission of the preacher is so sharply defined and so carefully guarded, we cannot suppose that he is at liberty to diverge in the slightest degree from the line of duty which he is so clearly instructed to follow. Whatever liberty may be accorded to ministers in the discussion and advocacy of questions and principles of secular, literary, political, and scientific interest, their right to invest these subjects with the prestige of the pulpit, and to make them the staple of pulpit discourse, is indefensible. Their call to the ministry was not in reference to these things, and the commission under which they profess to act lays a proscriptive ban upon their introduction.

2. Fidelity to the Apostle's determination is the condition of power. The Gospel in its purity is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them which believe."

The true power of the pulpit is not intellectual. It is not the power of mind. Nor is it the power which genius and eloquence display in exciting and wielding the lower passions and superficial sympathies. This is often displayed without any corresponding results in the moral and spiritual man. The power of the lecture, the rostrum, and the bar, is not pulpit power. The culture and art which bring success to them, may enhance the attractiveness and promote the efficiency of the preacher, and should be studied to these ends; but these alone will never secure that desideratum in preaching which we call power. They are neither barriers to it, nor the essential conditions of it. The ministrations of the sanctuary may be invested with a factitious interest, and spell-bound multitudes may be held by attractions which are foreign to the real purpose of preaching; and congregations gathered upon the spur of such incentives, and entertained with such repasts, may starve for spiritual food, and be dismissed without feeling those alarming convictions and

pressing wants which God's message should awaken in the soul. True power is displayed in affecting the conscience, in arousing and stimulating the spiritual life, and in leaving the hearer either a new creature in Christ, or without excuse in the rejection of the Gospel.

We believe that power like this is to be attained only by adhering to the Apostle's resolve—by knowing nothing but Christ, and Him crucified. Jesus exclaimed, "and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." This was the announcement of a new power for the regeneration of the world. The lifting up of Christ shall draw all men. It is an attractive and subduing power. Nothing else can reach the inmost depths of our spiritual nature, or meet the wants of a perishing world. It is God's chosen instrument for effecting the salvation of men, and this result will be accomplished through the ministry, just in proportion as the ministry is faithful in presenting it.

And because it is in companionship with this doctrine that the mightiest energies of the Holy Ghost are put forth. It is when the atonement is thus singly presented, that the Gospel is preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven," and the cries of conviction, the groans of penitence, and the triumph and shouts of faith, are heard. Our Lord says of the Spirit, that "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you." In the agency of the Spirit, the promise of the Saviour is fulfilled to His faithful ministers. "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!" Apart from the preaching of Christ crucified, the minister has no right to expect the baptism of fire. The "unction of the Holy One" is his, so long as he stands by the Cross; but when Christ is hid behind self, or obscured by the trivial clap-trap of pulpit popularizing, what wonder that the grieved Spirit takes His flight? How often is the blessed Spirit grieved, and driven away from our pulpits, by this cause? The Word can never be with power without the Holy Ghost, and we cannot have the Holy Ghost unless the burden of our preaching be Christ, and Him crucified.

This doctrine, then, secures the condition of pulpit power. Without it, a Paul plants in vain, and an Apollos waters but to witness the waste of his labor. With it, the feeblest instruments are strong, and the weakest agents become the honored means of salvation. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds." Nothing which learning

can bring to the task, nothing which eloquence can furnish, neither the gems of a glowing fancy nor the embellishments of imagination, can supply the place. If we would clothe our ministry with power, with power to save, Christ must be lifted up, and evidently set forth crucified. The Cross must stand alone in its sublime simplicity. The wealth of intellect and the gifts of genius must bow to the unadorned grandeur of the theme, whilst the Lamb of God is presented in bold relief, as the sole object to which the faith and hope of the world shall be directed.

3. The preaching of Christ is more than anything else calculated to develop ministerial zeal.

One of our greatest wants is an earnest ministry. The demands which are made for a learned ministry may be just enough, and those provisions which are being made to secure this desirable qualification may be every way laudable, but we would place earnestness as more needed, and without which no scholastic culture can be of eminent use. Without earnestness, the ministry is a self-stultification. Christ crucified leads to earnestness, by keeping the end of preaching ever before us. This end is to save souls, and the preacher is wanting in true zeal who does not always feel this burden weighing upon him. The atonement is a call of mercy to them that perish, and the preacher stands between the remedy and its application. An earnest, absorbing purpose must that be which draws its inspiration from this conception of the position occupied by the minister of the Gospel. There is no ministerial zeal, where this vivid conception does not obtain. Animation, stirring activity, noisy declamation, and display of varied gifts, there may be, but there can be no Christian earnestness. The earnestness of the Gospel is an earnestness of purpose, which rebukes every worldly and sinister end, and pronounces its withering anathemas against the ministerial demagogue and the truckling sycophant of popular applause. The Cross develops a character of large sacrifice and of heroic self-denial. It is a lesson of self-renunciation—a crucifixion unto the world. A suffering ministry gets its inspiration from the doctrine which it proclaims, and is at once the illustration and enforcement of its message. Nothing but the love of Christ, as exhibited in His death, inspires the ambassador of God with an ardor which cannot be quenched. The zeal of the missionary is not too high a standard for the entire ministry. To be a preacher and to be a missionary are one, and he

is neither who is not both. Where shall the fire of such an evangelism be kindled? It is in the Cross alone. But let the Apostle answer: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

4. The last reason which we notice for preaching nothing save Christ, and Him crucified, is, that in no other way can the Christian minister meet the responsibility which devolves upon him.

Human accountability is a momentous fact. In every conceivable condition, it is momentous. No man can consider it, and be unmoved. Every individual life has its weight of accountability, but that of the minister of Jesus Christ is most solemn—it is weightier than any other. In it, all the elements of responsibility are intensified. As stewards of the grace of God, the salvation of immortal souls rests upon the faithful discharge of our duties. Our hearers pass from our ministrations to the bar of God, and there we must meet them at last. Other particulars enter into this responsibility, but to give account of souls is the most fearful. In comparison, all else sinks into insignificance. The serious question with every minister is, how am I to meet the final account? We know not how it can be met, but by the faithful preaching of Christ, and Him crucified. Then, and then only, can he affirm with any assurance, "I am free from the blood of all men." If he has failed in declaring the whole counsel of God, of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, he has failed in everything. No fallen archangel would exchange his condemnation for that of the preacher who has been wanting in fidelity to the Cross.

My brethren, the hour of reckoning is coming. With some of us it may not be far off; and oh, what fearful, earnest work is ours, when the power of the world to come is felt by us, and when eternity throws around us its mighty shadows! Sure we are, that so long as we listen to the voice of eternity, and preach amidst the solemn convictions of the coming judgment, we shall never find an hour which can be diverted from Christ crucified to any other subject. The dying Summerfield exclaimed: "Oh, if I might be raised again, how I could preach! I could preach as I never preached before; *I have had a look into eternity!*" That look cannot be ours until our lips shall grow silent in death. God grant, when it does come, and our

eyes open upon its awful disclosures, we may leave behind us the savor of the Cross, and meet within the vail the fruitions of that faith and hope which the atonement has inspired!

If a sense of our final account should keep us near to Christ, the promised rewards of a faithful ministry should not be lost upon us. The whitening fields are before you; the wages, eternal life! "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." "Cast thy bread upon the waters; and after many days thou shalt find it again." You need faith to venture, and patience to wait. We then, as workers together with God, beseech you. Go forth, men of God, go forth; sow beside all waters. Morning, evening, in season and out of season, preach Christ, for your reward is sure.

In conclusion, Christ, and Him crucified, is *the preaching for the times;* or, rather, it is the preaching for all time. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

There is in certain quarters a growing demand for preaching adapted to the times. This striving for adaptation is one of the greatest evils which threaten the modern pulpit. It goes upon the supposition that the Gospel can be made palatable to the carnal mind, that the offence of the Cross has ceased, and that it is no longer to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Human nature is the same. The carnal mind is enmity against God now, as it was in the days of Paul. The heresies which the ministry is called to combat are scattered over the entire field of ecclesiastical history. They rise and set like the stars; they come and go with the periodicity of the comets, but they are essentially the same. Respecting them it may be affirmed that "there is nothing new under the sun." The preaching which was adapted to the apostolic age is not unsuited to ours. The preaching on the day of Pentecost and of Mars Hill would need no modification for these times. In reaching after a temporary adaptation, it is not impossible that we shall ignore the Cross, and attain at last to the drivelling wisdom of words.

If the pulpit is not adapted to the times, it is because we have failed to carry out the determination of the text. The Gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, is the Gospel and the preaching for every age. A fresher utterance we may strive

after, but it will be in vain if we seek it elsewhere than in an increased devotion to the atonement as the subject of our preaching. With minds imbued with this great truth, we shall come to the task fresh as the morning, and from hearts gushing with tenderness, and overflowing with love, we shall be able to speak as the oracles of God. Let us then, my brethren, gather around the Cross, and vow unfaltering fidelity in proclaiming Christ, and Him crucified, to a dying world. Let us, in this sacred hour, lift our hearts to our crucified and risen Lord, and pray for the pentecostal grace which shall send us forth as burning and shining lights.

E. Yates Reese

THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGE.

BY E. YEATES REESE, D. D.,
EDITOR OF THE METHODIST PROTESTANT.

Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.—*Romans*, xv, 13.

It is a sad truth that we live in a world of sin. Speculations on the assumed rectitude of human nature cannot change the realities of life. The melancholy evidences of a common proneness to evil are fearfully apparent everywhere. The slavery of sin is universal, and its consequent misery so darkens the pathway of man, from infancy to the tomb, that Inspiration has well recorded our present life, as "of few days, and full of trouble."

The effort to solve the problem of the introduction of moral evil is utterly fruitless. No man has ever been able successfully to grapple with its subtle mysteries. Philosophy may stagger and grow blind, in its ambitious endeavors to harmonize imagined inconsistencies with the wisdom and justice of the Infinite Being who made us; a shallow, haughty, and self-complacent skepticism may assume to set aside, with dogmatic sneer, the plain teaching of the Word of God upon this subject; but nothing can blot out the facts of our existence. Here they are, part and parcel of our consciousness; and the experience of to-day, in guilt and misery, in estrangement from God and hostility to holiness, is but the reproduced experience of all the past. When our first parents came forth, sin-smitten, from Eden, they brought with them the bitterness of the curse. Antagonism to God had become incarnate. Ever since, this has been the state of man. "By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Our glorious Gospel, my brethren, is the only antidote to sin—the only hope of the world. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto

Himself. The phraseology of the Gospel is distinct and significant. It speaks of justification, regeneration, sanctification, thorough reformation; of holiness of heart and recovered happiness. It presents these as the legitimate workings of the grace of God that bringeth salvation. It proposes the mastery of the carnal, the re-creation of the spiritual. It takes away enmity, and enthrones in its stead a love of God's law. "A new heart will I give unto you;" and "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new." In its earnest and affectionate exhortations, its abundant and precious promises, it offers light to those in darkness, liberty to those in bondage, joy to the sorrowful, peace to the weary and heavy laden, hope to the despairing, and life and immortality to those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Christianity, then, is intended to affect human experience. To what extent, is a most momentous question. To determine truth in this particular, is to determine the worth of the Christian relation in its direct influence upon man's present state. Few subjects can be more worthy the attention of a Christian congregation; yet there is reason to apprehend that, even among believers, few subjects are more imperfectly understood. We are apt to measure the extent of both Christian responsibility and Christian experience by the illustrations of it which may immediately surround us. The spiritual life, however, in any congregation, may be very far below the scriptural standard, just as the sense of Christian responsibility frequently is; so that, in determining a question of this sort, we should look away from our immediate surroundings, beyond those living illustrations of its power, with which we come in social and fraternal contact, to higher, more certain, and infallible authority. It is not that I may be able to ascertain what spiritual victories my brother may have achieved, or what is the measure of my own experience, past or present; the great question is, what does our glorious Gospel propose *to do* for him who, in the use of all the means of grace afforded, trusts implicitly to its teachings, and yields himself to its full control? We all rejoice to believe that it is *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;* but is there not reason to fear that we too often abridge the comprehensive significance of this and kindred passages, and in the blindness of unbelief, staggering at the promises, disregard its proffered blessings *in the present*, by setting its glorious conquests too remotely in the future; by recognising in

its salvation too little mastery over present evil, too limited a control over the vicissitudes of every-day life, and their tendency to fill us with that distrust of Providence and sorrow of soul which so often afflict the people of God?

Christianity, my brethren, either proposes a high attainment of spiritual comfort in this life, to which all discomfort shall be subordinate, or it does not. It proposes to temper the fierceness of every assault of temptation, brighten the gloom of every cloud of sorrow, and, dwelling richly in the soul, diffuse there a peace which "nothing earthly gives or can destroy," or it does not. If it does not, then to aspire after it is zeal without knowledge; to preach it, is fanaticism. But if the Gospel does come to man with such a blessing; if its whispers of peace, and rest, and assurance, and confidence, and hope, and joy, and walking by faith, and not by sight; if its rejoicing in hope, its patience in tribulation, its thankfulness in all things, its abounding righteousness, be not unmeaning rhetoric, but absolute, significant, all-glorious truth—truth setting forth the common privilege of all partakers of a like precious faith, through the sacrifice and mediation of a common Saviour and High Priest—then is it evident that he is living immeasurably beneath his responsibility and privilege, who, bearing the name of Christ, does not press towards its attainment, seek after the glorious possession, until, placing his feet upon this high vantage ground of scriptural assurance, he shall be able to take to him the whole armor of God, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

Have you never been struck, my brethren, with the wonderful zeal into which the Apostle Paul kindles, whenever this matter of Christian experience becomes the theme of his discourse? Next to direct allusion to the Cross—in which he saw symbolized all the stupendous achievements of the Son of God for us, both as it respects this life and that which is to come—there is nothing which so tasks, as it were, his marvellous power of exhaustive expression. The life of Christ in the soul, and its consequent victories over sin, as realized in the experience of him who goes forth to combat in the possession of weapons, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, lifts him to a transport of utterance, in which words seem all too feeble to represent the vastness of his conceptions of the truth as it is in Jesus. The text is a specimen of that wonderful verbal compass for which Paul is so remarkable, suggesting even

more than it expresses. Would it be fair to infer that, in these broad and emphatic utterances, the enthusiasm of the teacher has led him into exaggerated representations, and that, after all, they are to be regarded as the impetuous exhibitions of his individual zeal, rather than the landmarks of great and unchanging truth? Hear him: "Now, the God of hope *fill* you with *all joy and peace in believing*, that ye may *abound in hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Whatever this may signify as an intelligent petition, surely it is within reach of the believer to attain and to enjoy.

The words, "fill you with all joy and peace," are very emphatic. They cannot be intended to express a limited and imperfect state of confidence and enjoyment. That the Roman converts, in accepting the truths of the Gospel, had known something of the joy and peace it is its mission to bring, there can be no doubt. The history of the early disciples is a record glowing with the victories of personal experience. Of doubt, distrust, moanings over temptation, murmurings, dissatisfaction with the allotments of Providence, such as are now frequently heard, very little is recorded; but, in their stead, we have triumphant prayer amid bonds and stripes, and even during the agonies of martyrdom. We listen to jubilant songs from the gloom of midnight imprisonment, bearing away the soul to so near an approach to the Omnipotent, that prison-bolts are drawn and fetters smitten by the mighty power of our God through faith. When, therefore, the Apostle here prays that his brethren may be *filled* with *all* joy and peace in believing, I conclude that, whatever *their* joy and peace may have been, it was not complete. There were heights not yet scaled, depths not yet sounded, glorious trophies not yet won, achievements to which they had not yet risen, but to which it was their privilege to rise. In the spirit of a faithful preacher of righteousness, he would have them soar from inferior to superior joy; have them know, not simply the dawn of that peace which, dispersing the thicker darkness of the mind, fills the soul with a twilight of hope and assurance, but be able to stand amid the clearer light of the uprisen Sun of Righteousness; that, "being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with the fullness of God."

And surely, in claiming this high privilege for the believer, the

Apostle did not go beyond the written testimony of the Word itself. Joy and peace are not now for the first time associated with the Gospel. "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of *great joy*," said the herald Angel to the shepherd sages. "And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*." This was the annunciation of Him who is "the Prince of Peace." What wonder that *joy* and *peace* should ever after be the signal blessings of an enlarged experience in Christ Jesus!

Moreover, in speaking of the fullness or completeness of these, as the master principles of soul-emotion, the Apostle had found authority for his utterance in the teaching of the Son of God Himself. In that touching discourse delivered by the Saviour, just before the agony of Gethsemane—the farewell address of the Son of man to His beloved disciples—He thus addressed them: "Continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, *that* my *joy* might remain in you, and that your *joy* might be full." And elsewhere, in the same tender and soul-moving discourse, "*Peace* I leave with you. *My peace* I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

Paul was not ignorant of these teachings. He had pondered their import, and knew what a blessing to the world was involved in the benediction thus spoken. Here may be found the key to his seeming enthusiasm. All around him, men were laboring as they now labor, for joy and peace, where joy and peace were not to be found. In Christ, he saw a fullness for all mortal "need." His great heart swelled with grateful and adoring love to God, and with sympathetic love for his fellows, as he contemplated the exact adaptation of the Gospel to the wretchedness of poor sinners. It was a mighty achievement to lift the soul from its profound wretchedness of sin, into the light of holiness, and crown it with "joy and peace in believing," but the work was *not of man*, and therefore the Apostle's faith faltered not. With what a glorious doxology does he celebrate His glory who "worketh in us" this astonishing transformation: "Now, unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, to Him be all glory, in the church, by Christ Jesus, world without end. Amen." Here his faith looks to limitless ability for the accomplish-

ment of all that his anticipations might promise; and the very words seem to tremble beneath the mightiness of the thought they suggest.

You will observe, my brethren, the importance which the Apostle attaches to unfaltering belief. "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*." St. Peter, speaking of the ascended Redeemer, says, "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, *yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*." All the triumphs of the Christian relation, in the mastery of a love of the world, in the possession of that "peace of God" which is "to rule our hearts," are suspended upon faith. In the nature of man, this is necessarily so. The words of the Master, "*according to your faith, so be it unto you*," reveal the philosophy, not only of spiritual success, but of all moral, intellectual, and physical triumphs. Take away faith, and you paralyze hope, and compass the world in the foldings of despair. All great achievements find here their starting point, for in the power of man *to believe*, lies his power to execute. Faith is the strength of the individual; faith is the sovereign power of the world. This principle is easily enough understood in its application to the present and the secular. Had there been no faith in the ability of the electric current to transmit human thought from one point to another, no such thing as a magnetic telegraph had ever challenged the admiration of men. *Belief* is the antecedent to all energetic action. It is so in religion. Transfer to the spiritual the principle thus illustrated in connection with the physical, and how entirely in accordance with the law of mind, under which we constantly act, is the idea that a man's spiritual victories shall be in exact proportion to his faith in God.

The Gospel comes to us as Divine truth, gloriously attested. Faith accepts it, not simply in the manner of a mental assent to historical narration, or as a system of correct moral sentiment, but as spiritual truth, in which are involved those living principles which are to be wrought into the texture of the believer's life, by which he is to be quickened into a full acceptance of its gracious privileges and precious promises, and with a hearty recognition of its Divine authority, "live henceforth not unto himself, but unto God."

By *believing*, then, we understand the soul's unshaken repose upon the truths set forth in the Gospel. In the very nature of the provisions of revelation, this is requisite to spiritual enjoyment. Where confidence in assurances of God's holy Word is wavering and unsta-

ble; where the things of the present life crowd in upon the spirit, claiming those moments which should be consecrated to heavenly communing; where undue importance is attached to the things that are seen, and the realities of the invisible, as subjects of thought and feeling, are put afar off; who can wonder that such joy and peace as come only to the believing should be almost unknown to us, and our religion degenerate, if not into a dead form, into an almost powerless profession? On the other hand, where the soul is alive to God and the communications of His revealed Word; where the invitations of the Gospel are met by the full, constant, unreserved responses of the heart; where the influences of the Spirit are earnestly sought, and gratefully welcomed; where Christ in all His holy relations, as Prophet, Priest, and King, is enthroned in the affections, and permitted to rule in the life; who shall wonder that joy and peace in believing should be the legitimate and inevitable result? A glance at ourselves would, to be sure, be sufficient, at any moment, to dampen our rejoicing, and plunge us into a vortex of hopelessness, were we not permitted to catch a glimpse of Him who ever lives, our ascended High Priest and Intercessor. That glimpse, however, should dispel all gloom, and awaken joy unspeakable. The faith with which we contemplate His sacrifice, His death and meritorious offering, His glorious mediation, should be a confident, unfaltering, and rejoicing faith. For here, and here alone, is God's special pledge to the believer; a pledge of present succor and of future and eternal triumph. *He* lives; and because He lives, we shall live also. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Allow me here, my brethren, to remark, that this state of joy and peace in believing is not to be confounded with a stoical insensibility to the sorrows and calamities which daily surround us. It consists not in a constant exhilaration that regards with unconcern all sublunary anxieties, and, crushing out the common sensibilities of our nature, frees us from all sympathy with the bitterness and disappointment which fill up the measure of every man's experience on earth. It must not be mistaken for an unsubstantial and purely emotional state of mind, which feeds itself on visions, and indulges in rhapsodical dreams. We are yet in the flesh. The discipline of trial and temptation is not completed. Satan is still our watchful foe. What

we do claim as the believer's privilege is, not an exemption from earthly sorrow, not a deliverance from buffeting and fierce conflicts, not an insensibility to those shocks of disaster to which he is every moment just as liable as other men, but the possession of a living principle in the soul, which rises above them, and holds them under a resolute mastery, which imparts a calm acquiescence in the dispensations of an all-wise Providence, a firm reliance on the out-working of His gracious purposes, and a steadfast rejoicing in every time of trouble. For, amid the fiercest conflicts, we have the assurance that grace will be afforded according to our need. The way of escape will be opened, and the natural result of strong, unfaltering confidence in God, will be the creation of *a hope*, wrought in us by experience, which will bring to us an earnest of future and eternal good.

Hope, in the natural order of the emotions, stands related to despair as its opposite. Wherever it lives, sorrow is not complete. Where it abounds, joy and peace quicken into lively exercise. It is the province of hope to turn sorrow into joy, and kindle smiles that beautify the tears which affliction wrings from the heart of the sufferer. Hope, such as that which the text recognises, maketh not ashamed, does not disappoint. It bears the signet of Divine creation, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Earthly hopes disappoint us. They mock us by recreating themselves, only to end in final defeat. But in Christ we have hope as "an anchor, sure and steadfast." The abounding of this hope—that is, its realized influence in the soul of the believer—will go far towards transforming earth into a paradise. For "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The future and the invisible become, as it were, present and tangible; and though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him, yet are they revealed to us by the unutterable communications of the Holy Spirit. Hence, our Gospel speaks of "rejoicing in hope," of "full assurance of hope," of "a lively hope," of "the hope of glory," of "that blessed hope," and of "strong consolation," as the possession of them who "have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." Depend upon it, brethren, there is a significance in these phrases which we are slow to appreciate and improve. And, surely, no loftier petition, no more comprehensive desire, could have moved the lips and glowed in the heart of the Apostle, pleading

for the spiritual triumph of his brethren, than this: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

The *power of the Holy Ghost!* Here is the great instrumentality. Nothing else can lift us into this state of abounding hope. All spiritual life comes by this power. To the unregenerate, this language is mysterious, if not unmeaning; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." But the experience of countless thousands has verified our Lord's declaration, "ye *know* Him." When the Comforter should come, He was to dwell with the disciples, and to be *in* them. This is true in regard to every converted man. The change which the term itself implies, all the processes of the gracious work, from the first dawn of consideration, the first throb of penitential sorrow, the first gleam of peace with God, through the exercise of justifying faith, to its highest aboundings of hope, are the workings of this mighty power within us. The New Testament is replete with distinct teaching upon this point. Here alone, the soul of man, in its loftiest aspirations, meets that which can assuage its thirst and satisfy its hunger, for here alone is it brought into spiritual communication with its Father and its God.

The phrase, "*abound* in hope," is suggestive of degrees in the enjoyment or consciousness of this blessing. Hope may exist, where hope can hardly be said to abound. In like manner, there are degrees in which the Spirit of God is manifested in the heart. Whatever of spiritual comfort any man here has ever known, it was wrought in him by the power of the Holy Ghost. But to receive the Holy Ghost, is one thing; to be "filled with the Holy Ghost," is another. To be partaker of the hope of the Gospel, is one thing; to *abound* in hope, is another. The Apostle sets the latter as a high mark before those to whom he writes. He evidently regarded it as an attainable grace. He offers petition after petition to this end, in behalf of his brethren. He encourages them with the assurance that God is "able to make all grace abound" towards them. He reminds them that Jehovah hath said to His people, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people;" and from these promises, He exhorts them to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." Rich and deep as was his own

experience, the exhaustless provision he himself claims not to have measured; but as an example to his brethren, leading in the van, and flushed with past victories, he exclaims, as he beckons them onward: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling of God, in Christ Jesus."

The recognition of the great truth suggested by the concluding words of the text is of the last importance to us, not only as individuals, but as a church. All our power to be what a church should be, to do what a church should do, lies here. "Without Me, ye can do nothing." The might of the Spirit is what Christians want, to enable them to go forward, conquering and to conquest. It must quicken our prayers, kindle our songs, illuminate our understandings, penetrate our hearts, and vitalize all our religious efforts, or they will avail nothing. Learning is powerless, eloquence is powerless, the ministry is powerless, in the accomplishment of the great spiritual results which the Gospel contemplates, if they be without the aid of the Holy Spirit. All the machinery of modern Christendom, gigantic and full of promise as it is, when allied to this spiritual agency, can never give to the church its true moral power, can never accelerate the final triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom. Let us not lose sight of this great truth—our help is in God! In the possession of enlarged facilities of a purely physical character, there is great danger that the source of true power may be overlooked, and a pride of mere material and show, and a reliance upon them, take the place of an earnest zeal for the spirituality of the Gospel.

Yonder gigantic steamer impresses the beholder with what he calls the power of machinery. He looks at her massive proportions, he examines her huge and well-polished levers, he pauses with amazement to witness the rapid revolutions of her mammoth wheels, and goes away filled with wonder at the triumph of inventive power. But the power of the machinery lies not in anything *he has seen*. All that has no power, except as it is acted upon. All that wonderful contrivance is secondary, not primary. The mechanism is valueless, unless an element altogether distinct from itself shall be introduced. This once superadded, and the huge structure moves majestically, in accomplishment of the great purpose for which it was designed. An artisan, who should devise and execute without constant reference to

this principle, would bring upon himself the scorn of the scientific, and the sure mortification of defeat. He must never forget the motive power. To its requirements, everything must be made subordinate. And if this is true in nature, how much more in grace. Of what avail are all the externals of religion, the graces of rhetoric, the generous gifts of liberal hands in prompt responses to calls for pecuniary aid—all organization, forms, ceremonies, church appliances—of what avail are they all, if they be not subordinated and controlled by the power of the Holy Ghost.

How, then, may this power of the Holy Ghost be secured? To you, to me, to every Christian, to all churches, what other question rises above this? Who shall solve it for us? Let the Master speak: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask* Him." Oh, for faith to believe! "Ask, and it *shall be given* you; seek, and *ye shall* find; knock, and it *shall be opened unto you.*" Is not this enough? Falters our faith still? Hesitate our anxious, seeking hearts? Jesus would give us assurance. Listen again: "*For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened!*" There is the promise of your Master, and mine! Is it trustworthy? Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord abideth forever.

And, now, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

C. M. A. Butler

VAIN THOUGHTS.

BY REV. C. M. BUTLER, D. D.,
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O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?—*Jeremiah*, iv, 14.

The soul of man is here represented as a dwelling, and vain thoughts as guests or lodgers.

In the hearts of the Jews, such thoughts lodged. Judgment was about to overtake them. The Babylonians were soon to be upon them. Yet the "vain thoughts" of security, and of God's certain protection, were fixed in their hearts. They arose from their "wickedness." Jeremiah could not dislodge them. He directed against them in vain God's sure words. Argument, illustration, demonstration, and threatenings, failed. "Wickedness" kept them there. Hence, seeing the futility of proof, while the wickedness remained, he cried, "Oh Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge in thee?"

The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is symbolized by water cleansing things defiled. Hence its use in baptism. "Arise and wash away thy sins!" "The washing of regeneration." These expressions refer to the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit in the heart renewed. That Spirit expels defilements. They cannot remain fixed where there has been the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Vain thoughts, which proceed from an evil heart of sin and unbelief, cannot "lodge" in such a heart. If the Jews would have washed their hearts from wickedness, vain thoughts would no longer have *lodged* in them.

An unrenewed heart is the home, the lodging-place, of vain thoughts. In a fully-sanctified soul, they can only intrude themselves, as uninvited and unwelcome guests. Such a soul, if it cannot

keep them from entering, will at least not permit them to lodge within it. Vain thoughts may be said to lodge in the heart in which they are often, habitually, and unresistingly, indulged.

The duty of controlling the thoughts is a very solemn one. It is too little felt by most Christians. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." His real character determines his habitual thoughts. His habitual thoughts indicate his real character. And yet, what Christian among us is not more careful of his conduct than of his thoughts? Who does not *do*, in the *thinking*, that which he would not dare do in the *deed?* For, although it be a general law, that "as a man thinketh in his *heart*," so "is he" in his *life*—though the act of sin is always preceded by the thought of sin—yet it is true, also, that many thoughts and desires of sin may not be matured into corresponding deeds. The blossom of thought may not set into the germ of purpose, and ripen into the fruit of deed. Hence, Christians are tempted to lose sight of the sin and danger of vain and wicked thoughts. They forget that such thoughts themselves, if indulged, *are sins*. They forget that the chief, original, real, spiritual sinfulness of *a deed* is found in the indulged thought of passion or desire from which it sprang. There would be no fruit, if there were not first a blossom. The evil life is in the blossom. The ripe apple of Sodom, the deed of licentiousness, is but the full growth of the germ of lustful thought. The rank, rough thistle, the open act of rebellion and defiance, was first a soft and downy seed—a mere murmuring and discontent. Vain thoughts indulged are themselves sins. Observe how closely Christ connects them with, and enumerates them among, crimes, and refers them all alike to the heart. "For out of the heart proceed *evil thoughts*, murder, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." "Evil thoughts" take the lead and command of this frightful procession of crimes that proceed out of the heart, as robbers and murderers from their den.

I. *Vain thoughts!* Oh, how innumerable they are! Their name is legion! One day's history of the thoughts, desires, imaginations, and conceptions, of all the inhabitants of the earth—what a black book it would make! One day's history of the inner life of the *professed*, nay, of the *real*, Christians of the world—what a melancholy, shameful, confounding, humiliating book that would be! Because, for the Christian, not those thoughts only are vain which are directly

sinful, but all unbelieving, discontented, idle, aimless thoughts, are vain. Whatever thoughts are opposed to the truth of God, and the providence and will of God, it is vain and sinful for the Christian to indulge. And yet, how many such thoughts is he liable to admit, and even to allow a lodging-place in his heart, if he be not exceedingly watchful and self-restrained.

II. The liability to become the victim of unregulated thoughts is fearfully great. In the minds of vast multitudes, they are as Plato described them—like pigeons in a pigeon-house, flying in and out and about, without aim or order. There are so many openings through which they fly in—so many corners in which they can make their nests and hatch their broods! Living, as we do, in a most wicked world, and moving amidst scenes of sin, they come in through the eye to the mind, and become familiar conceptions. Having evil hearts, out of *them* proceed evil thoughts. Being often given up to idleness and reverie, these thoughts swarm and intercommunicate their various evil influences. Memory brings in her motley train of fantastic, disconnected conceptions; and imagination and desire shape them into forms, which fire the passions and blunt the moral sensibility, and benumb the will for good. Thus is the temple of God defiled by the indwelling of vain and unholy thoughts. To keep them from coming into the heart, is beyond man's power. To keep them from lodging there, is his duty. It is a duty which can be discharged only when the heart has been washed from wickedness by the Holy Spirit.

III. Now, as the child of God has a lower or earthly as well as a higher or spiritual life, he is open to the temptation of vain thoughts. But such thoughts must not, and need not, be allowed to *lodge* within his heart. There are two laws of our nature by which thoughts become fixed as lodgers in the soul; the law of habit and the law of association. Trains of thought, often repeated, return again by the force of these laws, independent of our will, and against our effort and determination. Hence, sentiments and opinions become fixed in very many minds by the mere fact of being repeatedly put into them, independent of any ground of reason on which they might have been intelligently accepted. Hence, the incalculable power of education and of family influence. Children who have certain sentiments, opinions, and maxims, put into them day by day, and year by year, regard them as undoubted and self-evident

truths. But whether accepted or rejected, approved or disapproved, welcomed as visiters that bless and purify, or hated as those that corrupt and defile the heart, it still remains true that thoughts which have been often entertained cannot without great effort and discipline be excluded, but will return and return, again and again, and strive to get a lodgment in the soul. Each time the thought comes, it will come as the bird to the tree in which it builds its nest, with one more of those numerous slight and downy fragments of which the cunning structure of its permanent abode is composed. If the Christian be not vigilant over his thoughts, he will find that not holy doves, but black ravens, have made their nests and lodged within and defiled his heart.

IV. Take, for instance, *selfish thoughts, purposes, and desires.* A Christian man is in business in the midst of a sinful and selfish world. Hundreds around him view all business, and enter into all transactions, for the single selfish purpose of getting all they can for themselves. Maxims and speeches to the effect that this is the true work of life are flying about him every day, as thick as hungry birds in a field of grain. These thoughts meet his ear, and come into his mind. Moreover, he is in business himself for the purpose of accumulation. He lays his plans and conducts his operations with a view to gains. This is his lawful aim; nay, as this is his calling, it has become his urgent duty. Now, how can he avoid having vain and selfish thoughts take possession of his soul? His selfishness, stimulated and irritated by constant counter-selfishness, and seemingly exalted into a duty; his ear hearing, and his mind taking in, these selfish thoughts and maxims every day and hour, how can it be but that such thoughts shall master and absorb him? Oh, it cannot *but* be, unless his heart has been washed from wickedness by the Holy Spirit—unless he is careful not to let these thoughts, which fly into his mind, alight there, and build their nests. If a love of Christ has supplanted a love of self and sin; if there lodge in his heart generous self-sacrificing thoughts, placed there by the Holy Spirit when the soul communed with God in the early morning prayer, in the closet and in the family; if the habitual thought of God's unspeakable gift has made him aim at gains only with a view to honor God and bless others with his substance, then such thoughts cannot stay in the heart. The heart will be preoccupied. They may not even, except by stealth, enter.

They will only flutter on the outside of the heart, the interior of which they are not permitted to occupy. The windows will be closed to them. The doves of holy thought and principle and desire, which flew to their windows in the morning, will remain brooding and softly murmuring within, while these birds of prey scream and wheel impotently without.

V. It is so, also, in the case of *discontented thoughts*. All around us are the prosperous and successful. That which we have aimed at, and failed to reach, we perceive that many have attained. At a late period in life, we may, by reverses, be compelled to begin the work of life anew. At a point where we had hoped for ease and quiet, we may be in the midst of perplexities and cares. Even our moderate anticipations may have been disappointed. Our business, our homes, our families, our social relations—all, or much that we rely upon for satisfaction—refuse to become what we desire. Now, there are constant temptations, from these sources, to fall into habits of discontented thought. If this earthly life were our all, and if our hearts were not transformed into a higher love, it would be impossible for us to avoid constant discontent. With selfishness ever clamoring for more, and life, even at its best, never furnishing its full gratification, it were inevitable that we should be dissatisfied. Even with the love of Christ and the hope of heaven in the heart, there is a tendency to allow depressing and discontented reflections to recur and become habitual. Nay, under the guise of religion, they may be allowed an entrance. One may think of life's disappointments in a strain like this: "This is a wretched world. God means, by constantly baffling my hopes, to convince me of this truth. It is well that I should be discontented with life. It is well that I should feel, and express, and cherish, the thoughts connected with the disappointments God has sent me." Now, this is true, but it is only half the truth. God has, indeed, sent you disappointments, that you should be discontented with earth, but not that you should allow thoughts of earth's unsatisfactoriness to rest and throw a gloom within your heart, but only to direct you to cherish those sweeter and higher thoughts of Heaven, and of spiritual and holy satisfaction, which can never fail you. This is a higher strain of thought, and is altogether cheerful and pleasant: "Blessed be God for my disappointments! Praised be His name that my desires in life have *not* been gratified. Thus am I led to think upon my portion—to dwell on God's kind

purposes—to revolve His promises—to be led away from being absorbed in the thoughts of vanity or of earthly good—and to meditate more upon the greater blessings of the disappointments which are discipline, than of the successes which would be temptation." Such are the holy and contented meditations with which, preoccupying the heart, we may keep out vain and repining thoughts. In Switzerland, shepherds sometimes drive their flocks over the lower glaciers in the glens, in order that they may reach the green pasturage which smiles above. So does the Good Shepherd drive our reluctant feet over icy disappointments, to seek the green pastures which lie high up on the mountain of the Lord, where the airs are purer, and where the sunlight glorifies all that lies below.

VI. Again, there are vain thoughts *in reference to the past*, which build for themselves, like wild ravening eagles, high eyries in the memory, thoughts which it is difficult to dislodge and destroy. Who has not made awful mistakes in the past? Who has not perpetrated sins whose memory is now an open wound, or a red scowling scar upon the soul? Who cannot go back, in thought, to crises in his life, which he would give all that he ever had of wealth or joy, if he could renew, in order that he might make a different decision, and pursue a different course? Who has not had fearful sorrows, which come back and scream around his soul in hours of weakness and depression, as vultures wheel around the exhausted traveller in the desert? Now, the tendency to cherish and revolve and renew these thoughts of past sin and sorrow, is very great in many minds. It is greatest in minds that are most ingenuous and conscientious. And it is well to call to mind the sins of our youth, and to confer with the sorrows of the past; to walk, with bowed head and humble heart, up the avenues of departed time, and pause at the places where our hopes lie buried, and read the monitory epitaphs that surmount them; this is well, if we do it to deepen our humiliation, and quicken our obedience and diligence in duty. But these thoughts are vain, and worse than vain, if they make us feel that because of this past we cannot have a bright, happy-hearted, earnest, and useful life before us. If they persuade us that the sorrows and sins of the beginning have inevitably necessitated gloom, inefficiency, and blight, at the end of our probation, they are vain and lying thoughts. It is not so! Samson's riddle shall here be true. In the carcass of the past, there shall be hived honey for the future. "Out

of the eater shall come forth meat, and out of the strong shall come forth sweetness." From such a past, and from right, wise thoughts upon it, shall come forth a strong, alert, and joyful Christian life. Peter's sin and shame shall be the motive, and the prelude, to Peter's burning zeal and glorious martyrdom for Christ. Paul's persecuting hate, repented and remembered, shall deepen Paul's yearning love. These remembered sins and sorrows of the past shall not be as stones rolled upon the Christian, to push him down the mountain of holiness, but rather as stepping stones laid before him, upon which he shall ascend higher. Oh, it is a temptation of the Devil, when we are led to coldness, depression, and inactivity, in the present, because of the mistakes and sorrows of the past. Such a tried and tempted past has made us well to know sin and sorrow; and a deep knowledge of these may and should lead us to aim and aspire after higher peace and holiness. Over our remembered follies and self-made woes, we will pass to glorious victory and success, even as in war, soldiers, over dead bodies, mount the parapet, and scale the wall, and snatch the victory. Then let us not allow the vain and disheartening thoughts which memory brings from the past, to lodge in the heart, and thus keep out of it thoughts of God's sure promises—cheerful thoughts, which rest on duty, and give birth to praise. If these wicked Philistines of the soul entrench themselves in the stronghold of the Holy Land, which is the heritage of Emmanuel, send up these thoughts and promises into the midst of them: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me;" "Christ's strength is sufficient for me." Send these champions for God among them, and they shall be as Jonathan and his armor-bearer at Michmish, and the one shall chase a thousand; and the vain thoughts shall be dislodged, and holy thoughts—peaceful, happy, hopeful, thoughts—shall take their place, and hang out their glad banners from the conquered towers.

VII. *Unbelieving, skeptical thoughts*—such as charge God with injustice, or hang around His glorious perfections as an obscuring cloud—are prone to lodge within our hearts. There are two modes of thinking upon God. We may think of Him as He is represented in Scripture; as He is in Himself; as He is seen in the face of Jesus Christ; as our Spiritual intuitions and our enlightened reason tell us that He is, and everlastingly must have been. Then He is the all perfect, all loving, all holy God, and our hearts are filled with

love and praise. Then "our meditations of Him shall be sweet." Or we may look into this evil world, a world which He created, and dwell in thought upon its awful sins and uncounted sufferings; we may look in upon ourselves, and study our weakness, inability, wretchedness, and fearful propension to evil; we may dwell upon God, as thus seen in an evil world, until our minds revolve and cherish unbelieving, doubting, dishonoring thoughts of God. We may peer into the mysteries and irreconcilabilities of His dispensations, in providence and grace, until we cannot either see, or fully believe, that He is only and wholly just and good and loving. Now, all such thoughts are vain. They are unworthy the privileged Christian, who is permitted to see God in Christ, as He is in His essential nature, and therefore as He *must be* in *all* His dispensations. We hear in modern phraseology of "the night-side of nature." There are Christians who, in their speculations and sorrows, have come to feel as if there were a night-side to God. "GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL!" To look at God, and judge of Him by what we see in a world where a sinful free will has rebelled and marred His works, is all one as if we turned our back upon the sun, and stood in the shadow of a rock, and gazed down a deep abyss, and then judged of the glorious orb of day by the few straggling rays of light which only make the darkness visible below! Our thoughts of what God is should be only such as we find in His holy Word, and have derived from our own sweet experience in Christ Jesus, that the Lord is gracious. Thus shall all vain and dishonoring and unbelieving thoughts of God be dislodged from our minds. We will not then see God as the author or the careless permitter of the awful sins and unimaginable woes of earth. We shall only see Him in the midst of earth's imperfections, as the uncompromising and triumphant foe of evil—the beneficent Father, who educes all possible good from all inevitable evil. We shall see that all moral darkness has come of getting away from His light, and not from Him who is only light. Oh, the sweet thoughts of such a God! How inexpressibly blessed to look up from amidst the mysteries which enwrap us here, to God Himself, "whose nature and whose name is love," and to be *sure* that no evil is from Him, that He overrules it all for the good of His children, and that its coming has called out the fullness of His adorable perfections! On such thoughts we rise above the clouds of mysteries and doubt, and see

them darkly rolling their glooms and flashing their fearful lightnings on the children of sin and unbelief who abide below!

VIII. In the minds of men yet unreconciled to God, vain and delusive thoughts lodge, which are intended to quiet their fear, and keep them at peace in sin. They say to themselves, that they are what God has made them, and are therefore not responsible for being evil. They dwell upon the large mercy of God, and apply to the impenitent the descriptions of the boundless compassion which is ready to save the penitent. They strive to persuade themselves, that however the Scriptures may *sound*, it cannot be that a God wholly benevolent will punish forever and ever His weak creature, who lives only according to the nature with which he came into the world. Or they throw themselves on the excuse, that as they are declared to be unable of themselves to turn to God, they must wait until the ability is given to them from above. Now, to these thoughts they give such constant welcome, they are so careful not to entertain or allow an admission to their obvious answers, that they have effected a strong lodgment in their hearts. Satan has prepared and decked the chamber wherein they rest. He has administered the opiate through which they sleep. He has forged the locks and bars by which they are defended from the just and righteous truths which would, as the ministers of holy authority, dislodge these rebel and wicked thoughts. Oh, if they would but let their reason speak, they would see how utterly vain such thoughts are! You say you are what God has made you, and therefore not responsible for being evil. No—you are *not* what God made you! You are far worse than you were by your birth-nature. Even if we should admit that God is responsible for the evil nature which you have inherited—which of course we do *not*—still you have not acted according to *that* nature. You have made it worse. It, as it came to you, had a conscience, whose place was supremacy. You have not assigned to it that place. You have made it give way, times without number, to passion and inclination, when you might have yielded to its suggestions. Again—you dwell on the large mercy of God, as if, in its infinite reach, you and all sinners must be included. It is indeed large, beyond your possible comprehension. God is wholly, and, if I may so express myself, *inflexibly* merciful. He is not so weakly merciful as through mere pity to forgive the polluted, and thus defeat the very ends of mercy. Justice is wrapped up in that mercy. Even your own

imperfect human mercy is not separated from justice; or, if it is, it is a weak and contemptible quality, which results in direst cruelty to its unhappy subjects. God, you say, will not punish His weak and erring creatures, in another world, for sins to which an infirm and damaged nature prompts them. But He does punish them *here* for such sins. Then why not hereafter? The drunkard, the adulterer, the murderer, are punished *here* by God's providential government, for sins to which a weak and erring nature prompts them. Is God one thing *here* on earth, and another *there* in heaven? It were all one to say that the sun has light and heat *here*, in his beams on earth, but none of it *there*, in its source in heaven; and to say that God's holiness shines on earth, but that He has none of it in heaven. Look you to it—that as God punishes sin now, He will punish it more fearfully hereafter; and that as His holiness shines now brightly from a distance, it will be a consuming fire when it draws near.

You say, also, that you are unable to turn to God. This, indeed, is true. But that inability, which you make the excuse for remaining in sin, God uses as a reason for throwing yourself upon One who is mighty. *Because* without ability, because helpless, throw yourself upon Him who is mighty to save. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God that worketh in you to will and to do."

How vain these thoughts are, is clear, from your own innermost consciousness. Notwithstanding all these cavils, you still have fears and misgivings—"certain fearful lookings for of judgment." These are the voice of your responsible immortal nature. They cannot be reasoned out of existence. They are inseparable from an immortal and spiritual nature. They will remain forever. They may sleep, but they will never perish, and at length wake to sleep no more. They did not ask leave of argument to come into your soul. They will not go out of your soul at the bidding of argument. Prove, conclude, affirm, what you will, your spiritual nature will testify that it is an evil, a wrong, a thing of guilt, a real death and damnation, here and hereafter, now and always, inevitably and necessarily, to be evil and to be away from God! Oh that the Spirit of God would cast these evil thoughts from your heart! Why should vain thoughts lodge in thee?

Edw. N. Kirk

CHARITY.

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So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.—*James*, ii, 12, 13.

The two Apostles, James and Paul, have been regarded by many as teaching two gospels. But there is no contradiction in their thought; the appearance of it may be found in their varied use of the word "justified." Paul means by it, our standing right before God's law; James, our standing right before His Gospel. So far as this difference needs explanation, it will be met in the course of our meditations on this passage.

There is in the unregenerate heart an aversion, often unsuspected, to the method of grace; justification by grace, through faith. That aversion manifests itself as really in every unconverted professor of religion, as in the rationalistic unbeliever.

James wrote his epistle mainly for that class; persons who had accepted and confessed the system of grace, with a secret antipathy to its vital elements. And the passage now before us is one of the touch-stones which he applied to their case. "Brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons; for if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, 'Sit thou here in a good place,' and say unto the poor, 'Stand thou there,' or, 'sit here under my footstool,' are ye not then partial?"

Here is the socialism of Christianity, in its antagonism to the exclusiveness of pride. It is no attack on grades in social existence;

no reduction of society to a monotonous level; no opposition to reverence for station and rank, age, excellence, and office; but, simply, love against pride. It is not an advocacy of the pewless cathedral, against the pew in the church. It is simply charity toward man, rich or poor, agreeable or disagreeable, friend or foe; charity expressed in the sanctuary or out of it, charity everywhere, and always.

The argument of the Apostle is this: if we have really accepted "the law of liberty," then we have become good and merciful like God. But if we have not so accepted the Gospel, and the grace it proclaims, as to have been made condescending, kind, and impartial, then we "shall have judgment without mercy."

What, then, is the Gospel? Regarded as a document, it is the proclamation of a peculiar exercise of the Divine goodness toward sinners. Considered as a method of Divine goodness, it is a law, just as much as the Mosaic code; having, equally with that, its commands and prohibitions, its rewards and penalties; nay, a higher authority, more glorious rewards, and more terrible penalties. Christ is both King and Redeemer; and, when He calls us to Himself, it is that we may take upon us His yoke.

Yet the Gospel is entirely contrasted, in many points, with both the law of Paradise and the law of Sinai. This contrast is expressed in the phrase, "law of liberty," which designates it to be as peculiar as is the person of Jesus Christ, its author; requiring personal holiness, as much as the law of Moses; but, unlike that, first setting the soul at liberty from the bonds of guilt, and accepting sincerity and faith instead of perfection.

To one who has always had the spirit of obedience, and against whom the law has no charges, duty is itself freedom; and the law of Paradise re-enacted on Sinai would be to him the law of liberty. But to the guilty and sinful, that law is only bondage, because it requires holiness by mere authority, and with no relaxation of the penalty incurred. Its spirit is, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Then I may as well despair at once," is the natural, only reply a sinner can make to mere law. "God hates me, and I cannot propitiate Him. I have a crushing load of guilt upon me, which I can never remove. I am a wicked being, and can never renew the fountain of spiritual life in my own spirit. I must then sink under the load of my fetters, in absolute despair." Every child of Adam

would use such language, if he knew himself without knowing the Gospel. But the Gospel puts everything on a totally different foundation. It presents God in a new light. The law had revealed Him as holy, just, and good, to the good. But the Gospel reveals Him as good to the bad, merciful to the guilty, a Saviour to the lost. Here, then, is emancipation. The guilty, depraved, lost spirit, can return to its Creator, and Sovereign, and Judge. God is love. Under this law of liberty, we can confess past transgressions, acknowledge present evil tendencies, mourn over deep defects of character; and all this, to a holy God, a kind Father, without despair, without fear. The Gospel is a law of liberty also, because it reveals a complete, ample foundation of reconciliation with God, which most abundantly satisfies every scruple of the conscience, every sentiment of justice and honor, in the human soul. It moreover reveals a new Divine power—the Holy Spirit, which Christ compares to living water, to life itself. A free Spirit is to work in us all righteousness. Hence David says, "uphold me with thy free Spirit." And God says, by Jeremiah, "I will make a new covenant, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Once it was put without, by authority, on tablets of stone; now it is put within, by grace, on the living tablets of the heart. And another peculiarity of the Gospel is, that faith constitutes obedience to it. The law was to be obeyed; the Gospel is to be believed. The whole power of the law enters the soul, by the conscience approving it. But the Gospel enters by the heart believing it.

Faith believes God testifying in the Gospel, His mercy; as the conscience recognises God commanding in the law. Faith sees the law in the Gospel, and fully understands that Christ came not to destroy the law. It accepts the law in the hands of a mediator. The believer is a rebel acknowledging the purity and righteousness of the law he has broken, but at the same time accepting the grace that pardons and that renews. Unbelief, rejecting both authority and grace, goes on carelessly to doom; or, accepting law, and despairing of grace, it sinks beneath an insupportable load.

Many have misunderstood the act of faith, supposing it to be a belief that we are saved; while it is a belief that we are loved.

What, then, is the legitimate influence of this faith? Its results must be, humility, love, and gratitude. The trembling, despairing soul, expecting to meet only a God of immaculate holiness and in-

flexible justice, meets a God of love! He sees only a self-sacrificing friend, where he had looked for an avenger of blood. In that atmosphere of love, he learns to love; to love God and man; sinful, lost man. Here is a death-blow at the root of his selfishness and isolating pride. Here he learns sympathy. Being himself an object of Divine compassion, of that mercy which rejoiceth against judgment, he learns to show mercy to them whom his judgment must condemn. Seeing how tenderly God regards man, without respect to his attainments or position, he learns to respect humanity in every instance. Casting himself solely on the mercy of God, he knows the value of mercy toward his fellow man.

This was beautifully illustrated by the Saviour in one of His parables. The lord of a certain servant sent for him one day, to inquire how much the steward was indebted to his lord. It was ten thousand talents; more than fifteen million dollars. "But forasmuch as he had nothing to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, (for that was the custom of the times,) and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants which owed him an hundred pence, or about fourteen dollars; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me that thou owest.' And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt." What a picture of man, refusing forgiveness, mercy, or love, to man, when he himself expects forgiveness, mercy, and love, from God!

James says, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." In all your words and actions, it should be manifest that you have believed in Christ, that you have believed that God is love, have realized yourself to be the object of an infinite compassion. Never manifest a want of respect for human beings; of compassion, sympathy, or mercy. So speak, and so do, as those who expect to stand at God's dread tribunal; there to be dealt with, not after the rigors of justice, but by the gentleness of mercy.

This is the Apostle's first appeal; it is to our consistency, to our

best judgment. It is manifestly reasonable, in the highest degree, that they who meet so great mercy, should be merciful.

And to this he adds the consideration, that our pretensions to faith will undergo a solemn scrutiny. Even they who profess to be believers "shall be judged." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "But does not faith save us from the judgment?" No. While the Scriptures say we are not to be saved by our works, yet they affirm that we are to be judged by them. Let us get this clearly before our minds, by observing that the very question in the judgment will be, Had you faith?

Faith is to be tested in the general judgment; the Saviour has taught us in His solemn description of the scene, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. The whole process He makes to consist in—the discriminating act of His omniscience, by which every human being will be placed in one of two companies—the solemn sentence passed on each company—the execution of that sentence. The sentences pronounced describe their own reasons, and they are summed up in this: the reception or rejection of Christ. We indeed never saw Him, personally, a hungered or in prison, and therefore we have never been tested by that. Yet there are a thousand other ways in which the simple but momentous question, Have you faith in Christ? has been answered by our words and acts.

Observe how James states it: "Was not Abraham justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Now, observe what explanation he gives of this. He does not say that Abraham, by obedience to law, was saved. No; he declares, first, that Abraham received justification, or righteousness, which is salvation, by faith; and then that his works justified, or verified, his faith. Hear his explanation: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made (or manifested to be) perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." And the need of this form of justification is obvious; for, as faith is an act of the spirit, man cannot see it until it embodies itself in speech and deed.

Now, you will notice that there are many good deeds which in the final judgment will be no better than bad deeds. Some are repre-

sented as saying, in that day: "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Now, while the Lord does not deny the performance of all these excellent deeds, yet He declares: "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me." And Paul shows the possibility of speaking with the eloquence of angels, giving away all our possessions to build hospitals and feed the poor—yea, our bodies to the martyr's stake—and yet, of not being acknowledged of Christ. Where, then, is the difference in the good works that will justify, and those that will not? It lies here: those that originated in a living faith are deeds springing from a true, or loving, grateful, and obedient heart. They therefore will be accepted; and no others. And it is manifest that a merely external obedience to God's law is disobedience, and that no sinner begins to obey spiritually until he has believed the Gospel. A self-righteous obedience must be an insult to God, as it puts self above God, dishonors the law, and despises the grace of God. It presents an outward, heartless act, as both an obedience to the precept, and an atonement to the penalty of the law. It does not obey God, for He requires repentance and faith. Its motive is not gratitude for sins forgiven, but fear of punishment, or some other reference to self. It fosters, not humility, but pride. It produces, not piety, but formality; not charity, but selfishness.

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Why? Because he cordially obeyed God's new command. He came to God as a sinner, to be forgiven; to receive all good, then and forever, from the mere grace of God. Wonderful as it was, he believed just what God said. He prostrated every doubt, and fear, and objection of reason, before the Divine testimony and promise. He went fearlessly into the wilderness, unhesitatingly to the mount of sacrifice; never pausing to argue, to see whence help could arise, or how God could make His own word good. You see in him that faith and works, are fountain and stream. The one is in the heart, and invisible to man until it comes to the surface in deeds. And as James says: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?" If Abraham had refused to obey God, because the requirement was too hard, then his faith would have proved itself a dead thing. So we, if we pretend to faith, and then live in the want of charity to man, will prove ourselves never to have believed, from the heart, in Christ and the Gospel.

Thus our deeds and words are to be brought into the judgment as a test of our faith or unbelief. Words alone will not answer. If we say to the hungry and naked, "be ye clothed and fed," but do no more, we have not charity. Then also, if we have philanthropy that does not come from faith, we shall hear the Judge say, "I never knew you."

We are all to be judged. And the judgment will be terrible to unbelievers. They have not true charity to man. They have not learned mercy, from the Teacher of mercy. They have not the pure stream that comes from Christ the fountain; so that they really show no mercy. They may be in the church, or out of it; skeptics, non-professors, professors, preachers; but they show no true Christ-like mercy. And it is said, "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy."

Recall here the Saviour's parable. It continues thus: "So, when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, 'O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?' And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Here is an exhibition of that "judgment without mercy," of which James speaks. Unmercifulness is peculiarly a sin against the grace of God. We are taught to say, "forgive us as we forgive others." When we go to the mercy seat, we supplicate God both to give and forgive, most devoutly. When we turn, then, from God to men, from prayer to the intercourse of life, the Gospel requires that we be the children of God, giving and forgiving liberally like Him. God exerciseth mercy with great delight; His "mercy rejoiceth over judgment." He rejoiceth to give and forgive. A faith, therefore, that truly accepts His grace, will manifest its existence by charity, by condescension, kindness, gentleness, sympathy, meekness. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Jesus "had compassion on the multitudes." They were strangers to Him; they were a very ungodly people. But He could not think of their sufferings and spiritual necessities without compassion. His heart was drawn out

toward them. He rejoiced to forgive them, to supply their wants; nay, to die for them. "Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His;" he has never believed in His mercy, with an intelligent apprehension and a cordial faith. And he shall be found in the judgment on the left hand of Christ, and he shall have judgment without mercy. For even Christ will say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

It is then obvious why faith is the condition of salvation. Mere command, authority, or threatening, does not change a sinful heart. It may awaken fear, anxiety, desire; but it cannot produce "love, which is the fulfilling of the law." We require to become and to see ourselves the objects of an infinite compassion and kindness, in order to subdue the pride and remove the selfishness of our hearts. It is by the discovery of our deep and dreadful guilt, our utter ruin and helplessness, the infinite compassion and kindness of God, the immensity of the sacrifice made for us, that our hearts are regenerated, cast into a new mould, made like God. And hence the importance of a clear view of the fundamental Gospel doctrines. Faith is the condition of salvation. But that faith will undergo the most rigid scrutiny at the judgment. It will be put to the test, to show whether it was vital, operative, transforming.

We should then anticipate the final judgment, and try ourselves, in view of its scrutiny. Have we faith, true faith? That we are to discover mainly by our actions, and the motives that actuate them. Does our faith make us love God and our brother? We love God if we love duty. To the unbeliever, duty is a bondage, and sin, freedom. To the believer, sin is felt to be a bondage and a burden, while duty is freedom. The unbeliever acts from the constraint of fear; the believer, from that of love. The unbeliever looks for forgiveness on account of the smallness of his sins; the believer, on account of the greatness of Christ's sacrifice. The unbeliever loves man for his excellence and friendship to himself; the believer loves man for Christ's sake, even his personal enemy. There may be found a philanthropy without faith, which will not stand the final test. Yet without philanthropy, there is no faith. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

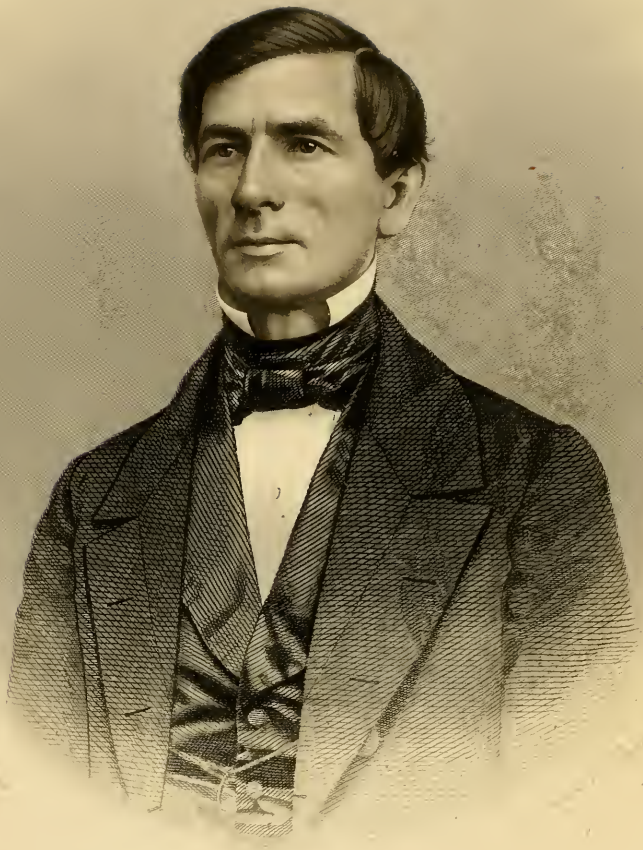
But what must you do, who find yourself an unbeliever, and yet anxious to be reconciled to God? You must despair of salvation by merely trying to do good. You must despair of working yourself

into a state of love to God and man. You must despair of help from any being but Christ. You must get your thoughts fully fixed on Him. The change you need is essentially this; to see the entire hatefulness of your character, as a selfish, ungodly creature; to long for holiness and reconciliation to God; to see in Christ a Divine love and loveliness; to see that God delighteth in mercy; that mercy rejoiceth over judgment; to love that Divine goodness, to accept it, to possess it, to imitate it. In an unawakened state, we are indifferent to the mercy of God. The goodness of His general providence satisfies us, or, rather, His gifts satisfy us, without any regard to the love that bestows them. But when we are awakened to feel the need of Divine mercy, then we are prone to look too exclusively at ourselves, and at God out of Christ, "a consuming fire." This brings us neither hope, love, nor obedience. We are transformed into the likeness of God, by looking at Him in the Gospel mirror. And the eye that beholds Him there is faith—faith beholding and faith accepting His love. When we feel the need of an infinite mercy, when we see an infinite mercy in God, when we cordially accept Christ as the gift of God's mercy, then we believe, to the saving of our souls. And this faith will show itself in the feelings we manifest daily and hourly toward every human being with whom we have anything to do. This probationary life will soon be terminated; and then the judgment day will bring our words and deeds before the universe, to testify to either our faith or unbelief. If we shall have had a faith in God that produced a true philanthropy, we shall be acknowledged as belonging to the family of God; if not, we shall have, whatever our pretensions or hopes, "judgment without mercy."

The momentous inquiry, Am I a Christian? is brought to each of us by the passage we are now considering. And the answer to it is to be found in our daily conduct, taking in part the form of an answer to another inquiry, How do I regard and treat my fellow man, particularly in reference to the classifications made in society? For instance, How am I affected by the accident of wealth and poverty? Do I know the worth of manhood, the value of a soul made in God's image, under whatever garb or complexion it may be found? This inquiry strikes deep. It searches for pride and selfishness, for envy and injustice, for coldness and indifference. These may lurk in the heart of a true believer. But the heart in which they reign has no faith in Christ. The act of repentance for sin has subdued the pride

of the heart. The reception of a free, full, cordial, and infinitely generous forgiveness of all his transgressions, from Christ, has struck a death-blow at that exclusiveness and indifference which characterize an unbelieving spirit.

We are generally accustomed to regard with mere contempt the aims and theories of Socialism. Perhaps a more just Christian estimate of them would be, to regard them as a perversion, under the influence of selfishness, of an impulse which may be traced to a higher and purer source than the spirits which feel its power. Their error is manifold. The truth that is blended with their erroneous views is one and simple, but of incalculable moment to mankind. The truth they have embraced and perverted is this: we must become brothers. But they do not see that the brotherhood to be formed must be a brotherhood "in Christ." It must originate in the subjugation of the selfishness of individual hearts by the power of "the law of liberty." It must be admitted that the church is greatly deficient in brotherly love and a pure philanthropy. But the remedy for this evil is not in organizations erected on any other foundation than that occupied by the church. Let philanthropists, then, come into the church, imperfect as it is, and concentrate their labors on making it perfect. But if they enter the church, it must be on the terms Christ has prescribed. He will not change its foundation, its principles, or its conditions of fellowship, to accommodate them. The church of Christ must be godly as well as benevolent, Christian as well as philanthropic; and whoever seeks to make her more philanthropic needs no new organization, no new principle. She only needs to be made true to herself, her principles, her Lord, and her position, to present the world a true specimen of what the race will be when it becomes one family, every member of it so speaking and so doing "as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."



Geo. W. Samson

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE HELMET OF SALVATION.

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Putting on as a breastplate, the righteousness of faith and love; and as an helmet, the hope of salvation.—1 *Thessalonians*, v, 8, and *Ephesians*, vi, 14.

Much more, then, being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.—*Romans*, v, 9, 10.

Christ called "His own," on earth, both "disciples" and "followers;" implying, as He said, that they should first "learn" of Him, and then *live* as He lived. Paul, Christ's great Apostle, was at once a teacher and leader of his fellow Christians; hence, writing for all time, as a master ambitious for the progress of pupils, he seeks in his letters to feed some as babes with milk, while he deals out for others the strong meat adapted to men of mature age. At another time, as a leader in action, he is seen drilling the young soldiers of Christ for service, minutely describing their armor, and seeking to accustom each hand to its several weapons of offence and defence. Is it not a shame for a scholar to be told that he "knows not what be the first principles of the Gospel of Christ?" Must it not be a disgrace, even to the youngest soldier of Christ, not to be able to distinguish his "breastplate" from his "helmet?"

The first citations we have made from Paul's epistles are figurative, and suggest the *motto* of discourse; the second is didactic, and gives us a *text* for discussion. The thought of the figure and of the plain statement are one. The Christian soldier's breastplate is righteousness, or justification, received through faith; and his helmet is salvation, or growing sanctification, derived through hope. The elements of the Christian's experience, described to the Romans, are

these same two; their relations and dependence being more fully developed. Here is reconciliation, justification, or righteousness, with the blood, the death, or the propitiatory suffering of Christ, as its ground, and with faith as the condition of spirit in us which secures it as ours; and here is "salvation," or the renovation and reformation of our spirit and life, with the "life" of Christ, His example when on earth, and His spiritual power sent from Heaven as its source, and with hope as the animating impulse in us, which makes its work progress to its accomplishment.

The three-fold distinction here indicated by Paul, often overlooked and even regarded unimportant, and that by experienced Christians, is seen to be most palpable and vital too, by a single quotation from the Apostle, illustrating the three several points of contrast in his words before us. To the Hebrews he writes, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." What Christian, however limited his experience, would not instinctively perceive the difference and the impropriety of the statement, should a Gospel teacher render it, "Now is our *justification* nearer than when we believed?" In its *nature*, justification differs from salvation; justification is a "gift" of God, complete at the moment it is bestowed, whereas salvation is a "work" of God, progressive in its execution. To the Philippians, again, Paul exclaims, "Work out your own salvation." How manifest the impropriety, should the Gospel preacher exhort his hearers, "Work out your own justification?" Every Christian instinctively understands that the source of justification and salvation are not the same; that the former is Christ's bestowal, directly, without any instrumentality on our part; while salvation is wrought by His Spirit through human agencies. To the Romans again Paul says that we are "justified by faith," and "saved by hope." However little an experienced Christian may have thought of the distinction between faith and hope, every one would feel that there was something wrong in the statement, should it be said, "we are justified by hope." These two exercises of the Christian, corresponding accompaniments of the gift and the work of God, are distinct in their character and influence.

Here, then, is the theme of our discourse, and its divisions; THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE GIFT OF JUSTIFICATION AND THE WORK OF SALVATION: FIRST, IN THEIR NATURE; SECOND, IN THEIR SOURCE; AND, THIRD, IN THEIR RESULT.

We are to consider, then—

I. *The distinctive* NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION, *in its relation to* SALVATION. This distinction is readily perceived in our religious experience; as well as in Scripture teaching, which is but the unerring record of human experience.

Dr. Duff, the able Scotch missionary at Calcutta, writes thus of a Muhammedan convert recently baptized: "A few days before his baptism, I asked him what was the vital point in which he found Muhammedanism most deficient, and which he felt that Christianity satisfactorily supplied. His prompt reply was, 'Muhammedanism is full of the mercy of God. While I had no real consciousness of inward guilt as a breaker of God's law, this satisfied me. But when I felt myself guilty before God, and a transgressor of His law, I felt also that it was not with God's mercy, but with God's justice, I had to do. How to meet the claims of God's justice, Muhammedanism has made no provision; but this is the very thing which I have found fully accomplished by the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the Cross; and therefore Christianity is now the only adequate religion for me, a guilty sinner.'"

I have conversed with a man of most intelligent and cultivated mind, who has declared and reiterated the declaration, that, so far as human law is concerned, the man who has violated the law can never be a justified man again; as truly just as if he had never broken the law, and freed from all consciousness of self-condemnation on that account. And when I have endeavored to unfold to him the idea, before little pondered, that through Christ's sacrifice the man who has thus violated the Divine law *is* restored to this perfect integrity again, he has exclaimed, "I won't believe it! It is impossible! It is a contradiction!" When, then, again I have urged—"Then there is no such thing as *salvation* possible, for I am sure I can have no heaven anywhere, conscious as I am that I have been untrue to the eternal law of right, unless I can among angels hold up my head with a consciousness that God is *just*, as well as merciful in forgiving my transgressions, and admitting me to the companionship of those that have been forever pure"—he was obliged to admit it; and knew not which to allow, either that there is no salvation for sinful man, or that justification as the New Testament describes it is possible.

Where, now, is the soul to be found that does not yearn after such

a consummation of blessedness for his own spirit; to feel, not simply that *he* is reconciled to God, subdued by His mercy, but, as the old writers, with more of propriety than we now are ready to admit, used to say, that "*God* is reconciled to us." The idea is, that the law of justice, and God, as its author, can be reconciled to the fact of our being treated as if we never had done wrong, and that, consistently with His own character, as a just being before the pure in heaven, He can *make it true* that we are *justified.*

Certainly this has been the aspiration of the men whom the inspired Word of God presents as examples for us. What else was in the minds of the patriarchs Job and Abraham, when one said, "How shall a man be just with God?" and the other exclaimed, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Surely, the great expounder of New Testament truth did not mistake when he saw this struggling, longing, in the soul of guilty David, as he plead, "Have *mercy* on me, O God! According unto Thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of Thy *tender mercies*, blot out my transgressions;" and yet could not be satisfied with *mercy*, and asked for the accomplishment of his heart's farther demand, "That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest;" making the sum of the favor he, as a sinful man, sought, this, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." And, since this is the universal demand of the soul conscious of its spiritual want, we should be prepared to appreciate Paul's peculiar statement to the intelligent Romans, that he was "not ashamed of," he "gloried in the Gospel," not because it was a special exhibition of the "mercy," or even the "love of God," but "because therein is the *righteousness* of God revealed," * * * "that God might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Justification, then, is that peculiar favor which makes it possible that God should consistently remit, pass by, forgive, and blot out, transgressions we have committed. When, however, this is secured, our "salvation" is yet a work only begun. Indeed, salvation, in the sense of the word as employed by Paul, is, from beginning to end, a work distinct from justification. When my sin past is remitted, I am thereby possessed of a spirit averse to sin in the future. It is an added bestowal when the new spirit is wrought in me. This it is which, in Paul's language, constitutes "salvation;" a new spirit, begotten, indeed, at the hour the soul is justified by faith in Christ,

but which is to increase in power and influence, according to the declaration, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is this work which the old divines called "regeneration and sanctification," which, in Paul's comprehensive language, is "salvation."

And why should not the word "salvation," as applied to the soul, take this comprehensive meaning? We may indeed exclaim, using the word in a limited sense, of a man on a burning wreck, "He is safe!" the moment the life-boat, manned by sturdy, resolute, and humane oarsmen, pushes from the shore; but, in the strict sense of the word, the man is not saved till his feet touch the shore. We may in hope exclaim of a wandering prodigal, "He is saved!" the hour when a pious parent, having wrestled with God long in prayer, is able to say, "I know that my prayer is answered;" and yet the prodigal, strictly speaking, is not saved until the last lingerings of wrong desire have been eradicated from his nature. So the hosts of Heaven may shout over a repenting sinner, "The lost is saved!" at the hour of his conversion; while still they are to be "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," and while these saved ones themselves may, at each stage of that angel ministry, exclaim, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed!" From the very nature of our idea of salvation, we can see and feel the force of those expressions which speak of it in the Christian as a work only begun, and yet to be wrought out, while our idea of the nature of justification is entirely distinct.

Our minds are naturally drawn, after this point is settled, to ponder the second truth suggested in its order by the Apostle—

II. *The distinctive* SOURCE *or* GROUND *of justification and of salvation presented in the contrast of the* DEATH *and the* LIFE *of Christ.*

How manifest the distinction made between the death of Christ and the life of Christ, as to their efficacy in securing spiritual blessing for sinful men. Here it is said that we are "reconciled" to God; we are "justified" "by the *blood*," "by the *death*" of Christ; and are "saved by His *life*."

This idea, that on account of what His Son suffered in His death, God is just in justifying us sinful creatures of His, is one that can never be fully comprehended and appreciated by a finite mind; and, to the man unrenewed and untaught by the Holy Spirit, it seems an absurdity. Both these suggestions the Scriptures make. It is through

the church, men saved by Christ, that "to principalities and powers in heavenly places" is "made known the manifold wisdom of God." The effect of Christ's death, even upon angels, is such that "all things in heaven" are reconciled to God through Him. And yet they continually "desire to look into" these things, comprehending only enough to satisfy them that God is perfect in His dealings with His creatures; and thus they are so bound to Him in love, that no more from their ranks will ever prove like those who "kept not their first estate." Among men, boasting of their wisdom, but thoroughly depraved in their notions of heavenly excellence, "the preaching of the Cross is foolishness." The idea that we can be justified on account of what Christ suffered is absurd. To us, however, "that believe," it is "the wisdom of God and the power of God;" even as it seems to pure angels.

How to explain his own idea, the thoughtful Christian may be at a loss. The clear-thinking Bible interpreters of the past age used to take hold of the common expression, that Christ "purchased us with His blood;" and with an application, perhaps too much pertaining to "earthly things," they represented the sufferings of Christ as an equivalent outweighing, in the scales of justice, all that the race of man united could forever suffer for their sins. Others, again, looking at the idea of social exaltation in position, rather than of material excellence, have dwelt on and developed the statement that he "ransomed" us in "dying for" man; and in the picture of a sovereign condescending to receive in his person the penalty due to his rebel subjects, an approximation to the idea that Christ the Creator died for man the creature's sin, has been attempted. Perhaps yet another confirming illustration may shadow the great truth. When a friend dear to me lies sick, to bring but a momentary comfort to him, I go forth to the field, and with conscious integrity take the life of a score of the little birds whose flesh may give him nourishment for a day. In my esteem, millions of such inferior lives are less than an equivalent for that of an intelligent being like man. I am right in this instinctive feeling; and so all heaven and earth are right in the instinctive impression that the life of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, yea, Maker and Monarch, is more than, immeasurably more than the life of the whole race of man, from Adam to the last born on earth. The one may be substituted for the other.

This indeed involves a truth, against which the mind of man may

frame an objection; one, however, which is the suggestion of a wrong spirit, not of a really erring understanding. Thus, it is said, the innocent is made to suffer for the guilty! Yes, and this is the *law* of universal being where sin exists. Angels in heaven became tempters to man, and our first parents suffered, innocence for guilt. A depraved son and brother inherited the nature of his depraved parents; and the child suffered for the parent's guilt, and again, in their turn, the parent for the child's bloody wickedness; and this great law of God's appointment (only partially true, indeed) became the universal law for man. Where and when on earth have not the comparatively-speaking innocent been involved with the guilty in flood and fire, in cold and heat, in famine, pestilence, war, in social and domestic wretchedness? And if, where there may be a doubt, since "all have sinned," and "death has come on all because all have sinned," why should not the imperfect shadow in all human history have its perfect substance in Jesus, who "knew no sin," and yet "was made sin for us!" And if, where the sufferer for another may be supposed not to be a voluntary sacrifice, God has nevertheless ordained that the innocent be involved with and for the guilty, why should it not be that the imperfect copy of God's ordinance should be consummated in the model of Him who "gave Himself" a free-will offering, saying, with exulting voice, as he proffered the sacrifice, "Lo, I come; I delight to do Thy will, O God!" Ah, the death and suffering of Jesus, my Saviour, in the view of perfect intelligence, love, and right, do so appear in heaven, that God is just while He justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus.

The first moment's reflection, now, suggests the entire difference of the statement that we are "saved by His *life*." Salvation is the begetting of the new spirit in me, which, while I am justified for sin committed, struggles in me for the mastery over my sinful nature, until its triumph is complete. The ground, the source of this, is the *life* of Christ.

There are two things here hinted; there are two elements in the power of Christ's life to renew me. If the need which I as a sinful man have of justification convinces me that I am perfectly helpless, and that, if justified at all, it must be a gift directly provided and wholly furnished by another, this beginning and growth of a new spirit in me I am equally satisfied is a *work*, in which I have a responsibility, though for its commencement and progress in me all

my moral power is utterly inadequate. Here, then, the life of Christ, it is hinted, is the source to which I must look for this work. What means the suggestion? Jesus lived as a man, from childhood up to maturity; and is it this earthly life in the body to which reference is made? Jesus lives now; being ascended from earth in a spiritual body, "He ever liveth to intercede for us;" and is it this heavenly life to which Paul alludes? Or is it both?

We are now in the flesh, and in this state have spirits of our own, clogged, indeed, by this clay. But these dead spirits are addressed, and the commands of God's law are upon them. He commands us to repent, believe, love, and follow Christ. Of course, the work of salvation is a work that we are to perform. At the same time, when these commands come in all their purity, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," where is the man that ever did or ever can perform it? If the death of Christ has justified us, we need a new Divine power to save us. And what mind now not wilfully perverse, what soul that prays to be saved, feels not that his whole case is met when inspired Paul directs, "Work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling, for it is *God* that worketh *in you* to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Now, it is the "life" of Christ that does this work of God. Sinful as we all are, with no one example of perfect obedience to God's law before us, we need a *model*. Christ's life in the flesh on earth is that model. Were He to-day living in the body, near to and with us, we might see with the eye His life. Since He is not, for wise reasons, now in the flesh, His life, long since passed, must, in historic records, be brought before us; and this is done in the Word of Christ. But as a model placed before an experienced man does not give him the artist's powers to copy after it, so the presence of the life of Jesus, even when in person He was on earth, did not give men the power to be like Him. As the life of a man is the life of his soul, so the life of Christ was His spirit's life. And that spirit's life, Divine in nature and power, must be communicated to us, or we are not saved; we have not the new spirit begotten within us, which, amid our fleshly imperfection, is to grow into the same image with Christ, from glory to glory. Need any mind that seeks salvation, then, stumble at the statement that we are "begotten of the Word" of God, and that Christ's prayer is, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth;" or at the correspondent statements, we are "begotten of the

Spirit of God;" and "when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth." It is the life of Christ presented to the mind by His Word, and made effectual in its influence by His Spirit, through which we are saved.

How distinctly marked to the experienced Christian, how precious to him, these differing truths! Transpose these statements; say to him, "We are justified by the Word and Spirit of God;" exhort him, "Work out your own justification;" and the youngest disciple of Christ instinctively perceives and feels the violence done to Gospel truth. The youngest Christian knows the difference, in his own soul, of the power of Christ's death and the power of Christ's life.

We are led on thus, after looking at the abstract principles that differ, justification and salvation, and then, looking at the person of Him who bestowed them, in whom His life differs from His death—we are led to look at ourselves, at the differing states of mind, the differing emotions with which we are possessed when dwelling on these two principles, and relying upon these two grounds of our own redemption and salvation.

III. *The distinctive* RESULT *in us of justification and salvation, seen in the contrast of Christian* FAITH *and Christian* HOPE.

A common ornament for an armlet, in our day, consists of the three emblems—the cross, anchor, and heart. Some think so little, that though they perceive there are three forms, they see not the three ideas. Writing to the Corinthians, ambitious of miraculous gifts, rather than to have a name written in heaven, by possessing the spirit of that abode, Paul analyzes that spirit thus: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Here is a form of words; but the idea may be as little thought of as in the three emblems on the armlet. We readily distinguish the last, the ultimate grace, *love in action*, or charity, from faith and hope; we must learn, also, to distinguish those two former, "faith and hope," one from the other.

We have certainly the Apostle's own clue to the difference, in his careful and distinct use of the two words. In the Epistle to the Romans, we read that we are "justified by faith," and "saved by hope." More than once, in figures addressed to other churches, we read of the "breastplate of faith and love," of "the shield of faith," and of "the breastplate of righteousness," or "justification;" but we read of "the helmet of salvation," and of "the helmet the hope of

salvation." As carefully as justification and salvation are distinguished, so carefully are faith and hope, their accompanying emotions in us. Let us follow up his hint, remarking first the distinction we make in our worldly employ of these terms, and then observing how this meaning of the words in themselves is made by the Apostle to illustrate truths in Christian experience.

We are accustomed to say, "I *believe* the sun will rise to-morrow," and "I *hope* it will be fair weather to-morrow." To reverse the statement, and to say, "I hope the sun will rise to-morrow," would be doing violence to *something* within us; and what is that something? Trace it up, and we find this to be our instinctive conviction. When any fact or event anticipated rests upon a regularly acting law of the Creator, known to me to be sure in its operation, my conviction of the certainty of the result is such that I say, unhesitatingly, "I *believe* that." When, however, that fact or event depends on an irregularly acting cause, or one supposed by me to be irregular, I have not the assurance to say "I *believe;*" I can only say "I *hope.*" There is therefore an *intellectual* difference between the exercises of faith and hope. Yet again. We say of the humane father of an abandoned son, "I *believe* the father would receive his son again;" and of the son, "I *hope* he will be reclaimed." Besides the intellectual difference just mentioned, there is a *moral* difference between the exercises of faith and hope. Hope implies a wish, a desire, which faith does not; for when I say I *hope* the son will be reclaimed, I express a *wish* rather than an expectation; whereas no special desire, but a mere conviction, is uttered when I say, "I believe the father will receive his child." When, now, Paul wrote, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, a sure record of spiritual truth, it was in human language he addressed men who knew the ideas expressed by the words of language.

When Paul says that we are "justified by faith," then he means to imply that the exercise of our mind is a conviction resting upon testimony sure and certain; hope would not be strong enough to express the idea. The death of Christ, a fact that had just passed before their eyes, meant something; and what could it be that led Christ to shed His blood in agony, but this, that through the rent vail of His flesh a new way of near approach to God, of reconciliation, of justification with Him, was provided. Before Christ came, to the children of Abraham before the Anointed One had died, to

most of Israel, the justification provided by Christ and all its consequent blessings was a matter only of hope; so that Paul said to Agrippa, "For the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, I now stand and am judged." True, to a few spirits like Abraham, the death of Christ and its results was a matter of faith before He came; but it was especially after His death, as Paul tells the Jews of his day, that the mystery of Christ, hid from the foundation of the world, was revealed, as in other ages it was not made known unto the sons of men. What a clear light, what a radiance of distinctness, a little careful thought upon the inspired statements, exemplified as they are in our experience, thus throws on the way of life by Christ. Faith, a conviction founded upon a fact that has occurred, faith in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, is the act of our mind which accompanies and secures justification before God.

When Paul, again, declares that we are "saved by hope," he implies that the work of salvation, which accompanies the gift of justification, is a matter relating to a fickle, uncertain, unreliable being; God is unchangeable and reliable; and if He has given His Son to die, the object for which He gave Him we may be certain is secured. But sinful man, even though renewed, is an uncertain, unreliable creature. The very nature of sin is, that it is irrational; no explanation can be given why man first sinned; and no man can foresee to what length a being who has once sinned will go. All I can say about my salvation is, I *hope* that the work begun in me will be carried on unto perfection. I am justified by faith; but I am saved only by hope.

Youthful soldiers of Christ, you may be trained in different schools; but are we not all one community, one people of the living God! You may wear a differing uniform, and learn the drill of differing corps; but is not our banner one, and even our armor substantially the same? Certainly our order book, and our field duty read from it, is the same. In the light of the truth, we have considered how near to each other Christians seem to be, in thought and feeling, if not in word and action.

Why should not the day dawn when Christians shall no longer disagree in doctrinal views? Human forms and features never will be cast in the same mould; and no more will human conceptions and expressions. And yet we are one distinct race among animate beings in physical structure, after all our varieties: and so we may be

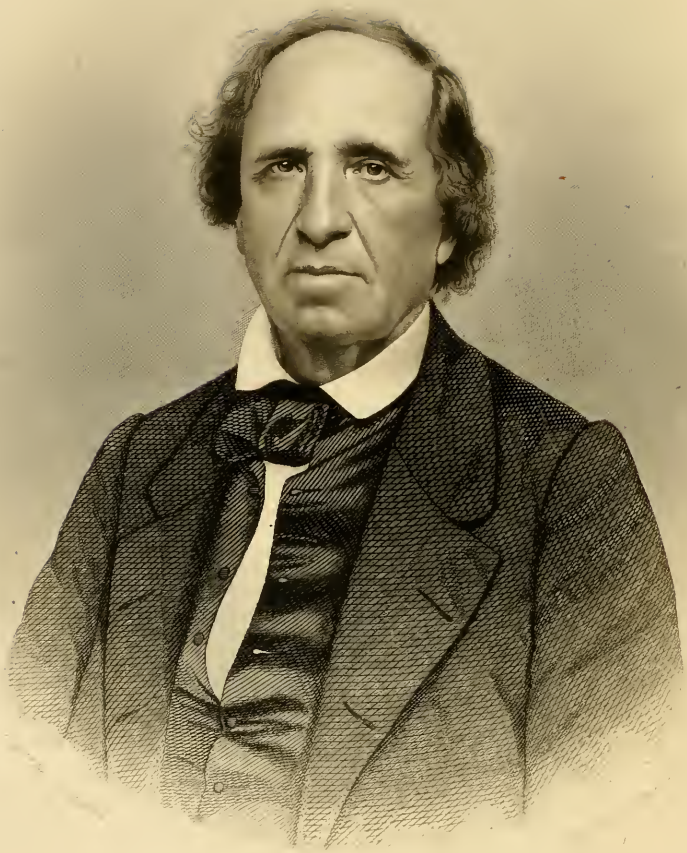
"one in mind," after all our differences. How manifestly one class of thinkers, one branch of the Christian church, has been absorbed with one of the two classes of truth we have pondered, while another class have been energized by its opposite. But how plainly in our youthful first-glance Christian impressions, and in our mature life-long Christian experience, all truth comes more and more to assume consistency, and to make up one perfect whole. Ponder the lesson; it is not truth in its letter, nor Christian experience in its spirit, which is to change; but our comprehensiveness in viewing our own convictions, and in uttering our own experience, is to grow unto perfection. Why, then, should not the Christian church be one, according to Jesus' last intercession for His disciples, "I pray that they may be one." Domestic relationships are not to be annihilated; my family must be my own. But though, in perfecting society, families may ever remain distinct, may not communities be more united, and society more one? Paul's practical commentary on the sentiment of our Lord was given to the Philippian church, thus: "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. * * * Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Does language like this need any comment to the young Christian of our day, yearning for the time when the church shall be one!

Why then, again, should not the individual membership of the church of Christ reach a higher stage of development? Mingling together with the spirit Paul has described, as the early converted and most devoted of the youth of our churches do, why should they not come to appreciate the truth each holds, and the grace which each displays, and learn to combine them in their individual characters and lives? The spirit of the world is downward; and the more men of the world mingle, the more they take on each others' errors and faults, and the more society tends to corruption. But the

Spirit of Christ leads upward; and the more often Christians speak with each other, the more each must "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Why then, finally, should not a new "power from on high" be brought to bear, leading unrenewed men to embrace Christ's religion? Jesus made the appeal of His plea, "I pray that they may be *one*," *this:* "That the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." That power has been felt within the last five years, as never before in the Christian church. The lips of objectors have been sealed; and the tongue of sincere men of the world has been unlocked to confess their convictions. The class of men whom apathy in one class of Christians and fervor in another has failed to reach, has been moved by the gentle pervading spirit, bringing out universal Christian faith, hope, and love. The hopeful are made disciples, and the hopeless are reached as never before.

Spirit of truth and grace, out of the perfect word of Christ's truth, thoroughly furnish the minds, and out of the infinite fullness of Jesus' grace endue with His Spirit the young men of our land and age. May they be thoroughly instructed in Thy will, and so thoroughly furnished unto every good work. May they stand, having girt on the whole armor of the Gospel; and having done all, may they not only *stand*, but *withstand*, in the evil day!



James O. Andrew

A WARNING TO BACKSLIDERS.

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And my people are bent to backsliding from me.—*Hosea*, xi, 7.

We design to consider backsliding, as found among God's ancient people, and also as it concerns now the church of God. It is with the latter, of course, that we have mainly to do. We are painfully convinced that there is a fearful number of backsliders in the land, and humbly desire, in the remarks which are to follow, to lift an honest note of warning to the church of God.

It might seem strange that an immortal being, formed for communion with God, and brought by the grace of God into the enjoyment of that sacred peace and communion, should ever for a moment decline from those paths of peace and piety into which God had led him; and yet the history of the church in all ages affords multitudes of sad examples of this propensity to backslide. The Prophet says, "Israel is bent to backsliding;" and this strong language is as appropriate now, as applied to Christians, as it was in the days of Hosea, as applied to Israel. God had manifested special interest for the children of Jacob. From the first calling of Abraham, in all the various and conflicting scenes of their history, the Angel of God's presence had accompanied them, directed and defended them, and guided them to victory and glory. By interpositions the most extraordinary—by deliverances the most glorious—by revelations of power, wisdom, and goodness, such as earth had never known—God had proclaimed Himself THEIR GOD, and claimed them as His people, His children. Israel was called His Son—His first-born; yet, in spite of all His wonders wrought for them and before them, they seem, in every stage of their history, to have been cursed with a backsliding heart. There was in them an evil heart of unbelief, in de-

parting from the living God. The nations around them were idolaters; their altars were in all directions, on hill tops and under green trees; the gods to whom they bowed were tangible—they could be looked upon and handled; their sacred festivals and mysteries were not only occasions of grand and pompous display, but in many instances were seasons of wild indulgence—passion, appetite, and unbridled lust, held uncontrolled sway; and not only did their religion fail to rebuke these riotous indulgences, but a voice from the shrines of their deities, and the examples of their gods themselves, invited to unrestrained lust and debauchery. Not only were their gods worshipped by fornicators, but fornication itself was a part of the sacred services, in many instances. But He who called Himself the GOD OF ISRAEL was invisible. A dense cloud shrouded His dwelling-place. No sounds of bacchanalian revelry, no note of lewdness, dishonored the worship performed at His shrine; but about His tabernacle, or His wide, glorious temple, the thousands of Israel gathered to pour forth the song and the shout of holy and devout gratitude to the all-mighty but invisible Being, whose pillar of cloud and fire announced to the hosts of Zion, that God, the Eternal, the Omnipotent, the Lord of all worlds, and emphatically their God, was among them.

But the sons of Jacob were a sensual and stupid generation, governed largely by the objects of sense, and hence they were constantly backsliding from the worship of Jehovah. To prevent this state of things, God hedged them in by numerous and peculiar institutions, the design of which was to keep them separate from the idolaters around them; but these usages and laws became irksome to a people whose hearts were alien from the spirituality of God's worship. God forbade them the use of cavalry, that they might not be tempted to enter into the schemes of conquest with the nations around them. The rite of circumcision, and the institution of the Passover solemnity, were well calculated to keep them in memory of the deliverances God had wrought for them in days of yore, as well as of the peculiar covenant which bound them to the one true and living God; yet they rebelled under the most aggravating circumstances imaginable. The altars of Jehovah were deserted, and idolaters arose over all the holy land. In looking over the history of the Jewish and Israelitish kings, one is perfectly surprised at the constant proneness to abandon Jehovah for Baal. If there arises now and then one or two good

kings, of whom it is written, "and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," as a general thing their successors are very apt to be recorded as doing "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." Why is all this? Is there something in royalty and kings and courts utterly antagonistic to the spiritual worship of God? One would be tempted to think so; and yet Hezekiah and Josiah would seem to stand out as glorious exceptions to the rule. Be this as it may, one thing is sure: the Israelitish kings were generally the leaders of idolatrous worship. Baal was too often the god of the court, and the obsequious people were too obedient to repudiate the religion of their rulers. Often, when their rebellions became perfectly outrageous, God scourged them by His judgments. The sword of the uncircumcised, and the chains of a bitter captivity, taught them that Jehovah rules in heaven, and among the kingdoms of the earth; and they were brought to their prayers and confessions. *Then* they were ready to say, "What have we to do any more with idols?" They humbled themselves, and God heard them, and had mercy on them. They sought again the forsaken altars of Jehovah, and rendered Him the calves of their lips. But too often this amendment was but temporary, and they wandered again in forbidden paths. We often wonder at this tendency to backsliding, which the history of God's ancient people records; but is not human nature the same in Jew and Gentile? And does not the history of the Christian church, both past and present, present just the same sort of picture with the history of God's ancient people? Is it not true of the Christian church in most places, that her members—at least many of them—are bent to backsliding?

Man is an alien from God. His nature is earthly, and sensual, and devilish—prone to evil, and utterly disinclined to good. The Gospel of the grace of God proclaims to him peace and pardon, through the atonement and mediation of the Son of God. The repentant sinner, by a living, active faith, appropriates Christ in all his offices—as God manifest in the flesh: Immanuel, GOD WITH US; as being here among us, enduring pain, hunger, thirst, temptation; enduring insult, slander, and contempt; and at length laying down His life for us; as descending into the grave; as rising from the tomb—thus triumphing over death and the grave, to make sure our salvation; as taking the mediatorial throne, and occupying it as our ever-living and interceding High Priest, who remembers us, knows

us and our circumstances, thoroughly sympathizes with us, and prays for us. This faith brings us to the mercy seat—enables us to cast all upon the power, love, and faithfulness of God; and the Holy Ghost comes down from the Father and the Son into our hearts, to enlighten us when we are dark, to encourage and strengthen us when we are like to faint and when we are discouraged, and to whisper to our trembling hearts the words of peace and pardon: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace, and sin no more." "Old things are now passed away; behold, all things are become new." New hopes, new fears, new objects, and new ends, now govern his life; he has now daily communion with God, and looks to God and heaven as the ultimate end and home of his redeemed and forgiven spirit. Now, this man's principles of action—the objects of his faith and hope—all belong to eternity. He endures as seeing HIM who is invisible. He walks by faith, not by sight. He looks from temporal things which are seen, to those eternal things which are not seen—which are rendered visible, tangible, and as it were substantial, by the glorious revealments of faith in God's character and his promises. The Christian must have daily communion with God; his soul must thus be fed with this heavenly manna; it must be kept daily and hourly in spiritual contact with those glorious verities, or else the flame of piety will die out of the heart; confidence in God will be lost; that affectionate, simple, childlike faith and trust in God, and that earnest and devoted love for Him, will expire, and the man will backslide. Now, no matter how soundly men may be converted to God, yet while they are here, and in a state of probation, they will be assailed by temptation, and may yield to the temptation, and backslide. This their great adversary knows, and consequently uses all his arts to induce them to relax in their zeal and in their watchfulness. He assails their confidence in God, for this is the vital point. He knows that this humble, grateful, affectionate trust in God is the only strong link which binds the soul to God. It is because of this confidence in Him as our friend and father, that we love God. We love Him because we have the witness that He first loved us—yea, that He loves us still; and therefore our hearts respond with strong and ardent expressions of love and heart devotion to Him.

It is not strange, therefore, that Satan should attempt, by every possible assault and all possible sophistry, to weaken and destroy

this confidence, for he knows that if he triumphs here, the day is gained. Now, we are not to suppose that the tempter approaches every one in the same manner. By no means. He has lived and tempted men for so many thousand years to but little purpose, if he has not learned that all are not approached successfully in the same way. He well understands the temperament and the peculiar weaknesses of all whom he approaches, and is pretty sure to adapt his temptation so as to meet these prevailing tendencies. In the infancy of our experience, perhaps we are assailed with questionings as to the genuineness of our conversions; and this may be more especially the case if our experience or conversion was attended with no remarkable or overwhelming manifestations of the power and glory of God, such as others around us have experienced. We measure ourselves by others, and that very unwisely too; for it is always unsafe to lay much stress on the mere accidents of conversion, as it is indeed unsafe to make the professions of others the standard of our Christian experience at any time, and especially at the commencement of our course. Or it may be that the young convert was in the beginning happy almost to ecstasy—perhaps for several days all was transport—but those hours have passed away; they no longer seem to walk on Pisgah's top, and they are assailed with doubts as to whether all was not a mistake; and if so, the question often arises, May not this whole matter of Christian experience be a mistake—a mere dream of enthusiasm? And about this time the young Christian unfortunately falls into the company of some who have only the form of religion, and know nothing of its power—who are what is called decent, respectable members of the church; whose great dread is lest they should be righteous overmuch, and thereby offend the gay and thoughtless world around them, but who have no change of heart, no spiritual Christianity. The pardon of sin, and the witness of the Holy Ghost, they have never experienced—perhaps have never even sought—and of course they know nothing of its power and preciousness, its peace and its joy. But, making their own experience the sole standared of all possible Christian experience, they repudiate as impossible any higher degree or more spiritual experience than their own. They insensibly yet surely lead the troubled heart to feed in pastures that are not of God's appointing. They are so charmed with the outside of the stones of the Christian temple, that they can scarcely think or talk of anything else than its beautiful exterior, its

merely temporary scaffolding, which is soon to fall or be removed. This class of persons talk largely of *the church*, its forms, and all that; but the Kingdom of God is not within them. They have been so taken up with the outside of the temple, that they have had neither heart nor eye for the sublime revelations of its pure and glorious interior; and now they have nothing to say except to deny the existence of any such glory.

The consequence of such association will soon be manifest in the altered tone of the young Christian's conversation. It will become vapid and dull, not savoring of the things which are Christ's, but those that be of the world. Instead of the happy and simple childlike and loving confidence of their early espousals to God, we have the language of chilling doubt, if not of absolute unbelief. Private prayer is neglected, or is performed without interest. No sweet visitations of peace and joy gladden the heart. At those seasons of communion with God, once so hallowed and joyous, now God meets them not as aforetimes. For a while it may be that the knees bend and the lips move almost mechanically in prayer, and a sort of dread of God and eternal things may for a while in some sort whip them up to the discharge of outward duty, but this state of things will not likely continue long. It will be apt soon to pass away, or only become spasmodic in its influence; and the soul, finding no joy and peace, no comfort, no spiritual food, in the mere routine discharge of duty, is very apt to turn again to those sensual pleasures so lately abandoned. And now these same counsellors, whose influence has begun their ruin, talk to them of *innocent amusements:* "Dancing is really healthful; the theatre is a fine school for morals; much is to be gained by attending both. Many respectable members of the church go there with their children; would they be found there if it were wrong? The enlightened and liberal attend such places, and only bigots condemn them." And thus the poor God-forsaking soul is enticed to take another downward step. And now fashionable parties, balls, theatres, and operas, appropriate the hours which were once consecrated to sacred meditation, godly reading, and private communion with God. These last are now given up, because there is neither time nor heart for any such service.

But it is not only in the earlier stages of experience that Christians are exposed to great danger from the influence of wrong associations. This danger besets us through all our journey. Many a

gray-headed Christian backslides through the influence of his associates; and in reference to this danger, as well as to every other, we shall do well to take heed and watch and pray, and that in a very emphatic sense. Your only safety in this matter is to take heed of your associates. You can control the choice of your companions; but having once chosen them, you have no power to say how far your head or heart may be affected by their conversation. That is beyond your control. It grows necessarily out of the relations which, for the time, you voluntarily sustain to each other. The very laws of your nature settle it. Nor let it be supposed that you are only in danger from the avowedly profane and ungodly. Association with those who are only negatively good will do you much injury. It is enough if they exclude God from their conversation. If they are simply living without God, and of course without hope in God, all such associations must certainly harm you. If your chosen companions are the men whose talk is mainly of lands and crops and wealth, take heed how you step—you are on slippery ground; for that which constitutes the burden of your talk will soon occupy the chief place in your heart.

But there is yet another class of companionships which are frequently the cause of backsliding. I mean improper marriages, where a young man of piety marries an irreligious woman, or, what is probably as much to be regretted, a pious woman marries an ungodly man. These ill-assorted marriages have been the fruitful source of backslidings in every age of the church, from the time when, in the early days, the sons of God took them wives of the daughters of men, till this day. It has always been a dangerous experiment, whether in the Patriarchal, Prophetic, or Christian dispensation, and must continue to be so. Indeed, how can it be otherwise? How can two walk comfortably together, unless they be agreed in reference to that which is the chief interest of life? I think it will be found that one of two things will be pretty sure to take place; the influence of one or the other of the parties will predominate, and the scale will turn for hell or heaven, according to the preponderating influence. True, the Christian *may* carry the day; but when we consider how much of fallen humanity with satanic influence is engaged on the side of evil, the contest must be regarded as a very unequal one. Therefore, let me just deliver one word of caution: take heed, O Christian man or woman, with whom you link your destiny for life. Marry

only in the Lord; for be assured that, in going to heaven, you will need all the help you can get. Therefore, seek a wife or husband who will be a helper to you in your Christian course.

There is danger, too, in the doctrines which may sometimes greet your ears. Whatever doctrine obscures the glory and holiness and love of the Divine character, hear it not. Avoid all Laodicean doctrines. Every one which does not tend to keep constantly alive in your heart an earnest desire for holiness of spirit and life, and an undying effort to obtain it and live for it, reject at once, no matter how specious and eloquent the plea which is made in its behalf. Let your motto always be, "The truth which is according to godliness," and "the faith which works by love, and purifies the heart." With these truths always before you, you will be apt to go right. Yet one more caution, and on this point I cease. Remember that books are often the most influential companions; therefore, take prayerful heed to your dumb library companions. Wrapped up in the pages around you, there may be much truth to save, or much error to destroy; therefore, be careful. Remember, many a man has been corrupted by a single book.

Some men grow rich; their business prospers, and wealth pours in upon them from almost every quarter. The man's head and heart are busy; cares multiply in proportion as wealth increases, and, in the same ratio, prayers decrease both in frequency and earnestness. One would think, that as his means increased, so in proportion would his liberality; but it is not so. He gives now more grudgingly, and on a more niggardly scale than formerly, when his means were limited. Then he gave according to his ability, and gave cheerfully, and the giving did him good. His benefactions now are small. He gives with an ill grace, and regards all he thus gives as a shameful waste, the bestowment of which causes him many a heart groan. Of course, this man is a backslider already. He is even now a worshipper at the shrine of Mammon.

Most men who backslide do so gradually. Personal ease and self-indulgence lead them to neglect the private or the social or domestic duties of religion. The pleasures of sense steal over all the powers of the spirit, and enervate and paralyze all its energies. Hence, the works of faith and the labor of love become onerous, and are abandoned. The world's opiates are swallowed freely, and the man sinks into a sleep, profound and deadly, from which he too frequently

never wakes till the hour when his waking will do him no good. It may indeed sometimes be the case that one is suddenly and furiously assailed by some powerful temptation, to which, unfortunately, he yields. Now he has sinned, openly and notoriously sinned, and his arch enemy whispers, "It is all over with you; God has cast you off; return to your former pleasures." The Good Spirit whispers, "Return to thy God; repent of thy backsliding, and the Lord will heal thee." But the voice of the tempter is most apt to prevail, especially if the delinquent be improperly neglected or managed by the pastor, or the church, or by surrounding friends. The backslider, at this stage of his history, requires to be managed with a great deal of prudence, firmness, and love. Many of this class of persons go finally back into the world, because of deficiency at this point. Alas for the poor sinner, if his pastor forgets the work of a pastor—if he knows not his people, or has shown them so little attention as that they feel that he is a stranger to them, so that they cannot make free to approach him! Sometimes it may be that the wanderer is lost because of the want of tenderness, sympathy, and faithfulness, on the part of the church. One in such circumstances requires to be treated with a great deal of faithfulness. He must be told of his wrong in all its turpitude. It will do no good to make him think lightly of his sin. Let him see that he has sinned against God grievously, and that there is no apology or excuse for his sin. But while all this plainness is shown him, remember he is a brother; and if indeed he be a brother fallen into the ditch, you must lay hold of him, and never rest till he is redeemed from his fall, and brought back to the favor of God. Woe, woe to the backslider! for he is treading a thorny road. The contrast of the past with the present will make him wretched: "Oh! that it were with me as in days past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon me! Then I was peaceful, and all was cheerfulness and joy within. The Sabbath and the sanctuary of God were hallowed by the blessings and presence of my father, God. Then my closet and my family altar invited me to a cheerful and joyful offering of myself and my all to God, who deigned to meet me there, and assure me of His acceptance of my sacrifice. Then He led me in green pastures, and caused me to rest beside the sweet streams that flow through the garden of God. Then I enjoyed, daily, sweet peace and communion with God. Wherever I went, I knew that the great Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was my

guide and protector. But, alas! those days are past; and now God frowns on me. I cannot approach Him. When I would think of Him as my father and friend, I feel that guilt repels me. I cannot pray with my wife and children; I feel that they have no confidence in me. If I go to the house of God, and hear His Word preached—that Word on which my soul used once to feed—all is dark, and brings to me nothing but messages of wrath and despair. My old Christian friends shun me; and the ungodly, with whom I am now wont to associate, I feel that, vile as they may be, they do not respect me. All around me is dark, whenever I reflect. A hell within me, and a still worse and fearfully dreaded hell before me! Methinks I would fain return to my father's house; but how can I? My heart is hard. No broken heart, no contrite spirit, can I present to God. No sigh of penitence stirs my soul; no tear of godly sorrow dims my eye. And then I feel that I have hindered others from entering on the paths of piety, or my example has caused them to turn away from the ways of God. Perhaps my wife has been caused to stumble, or my children have been hindered, and it may be I shall be the means of their damnation. Oh! Jehovah—the pure, the terrible God—could I only hope for mercy from thee! But wilt thou, canst thou, pity and forgive a poor miserable offcast from God, whose backslidings have been manifold and great? If a fellow creature had wronged me greatly and oft as I have wronged thee, sure I am I should not forgive him."

And yet, O backslider, hear the word of the Lord. He says He will heal your backsliding, and love you freely. He says, "Take with you words, and return unto the Lord;" and He hath promised to heal you. Hear, ye backsliding wanderers from God! See how unwilling God is to give you up to utter ruin. Hark how He expostulates with you: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? * * * How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim." And why is all this pity and long-suffering patience in the midst of such unprovoked and daring rebellions, such black and damning ingratitude? Hear it, O sinner! It is because He is GOD, and not man. So the very argument which perhaps at first led thee to despair, God presents as an incentive to repent and return to God, with a strong persuasion—yea, with an abiding and

unfaltering confidence—that God will meet you in mercy, and forgive you, and heal your backslidings, and bring you again into His family, and make you again His happy sons and daughters. Then, O backslider! delay no longer. Come home at once to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls; come, while God calls; come, while Jesus pleads with you, and entreats you to return to His fold; come, while the Holy Ghost warns, and, with untiring and unceasing patience, invites you to come home to the bosom of a forgiving Father! What joy would your return enkindle among the angels of God in heaven; and oh! what pleasure to parents, husband, wife, or children, on earth! Wait not, then, till a more convenient season. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Now—to-day—resolve to arise and go to your Father. Postponement but increases the difficulty. Every moment that you remain in your backslidden state but increases the power of evil over you, and binds you more strongly with the chains of habit. Awake, and act at once! There is no safety in your purpose of gradual improvement.

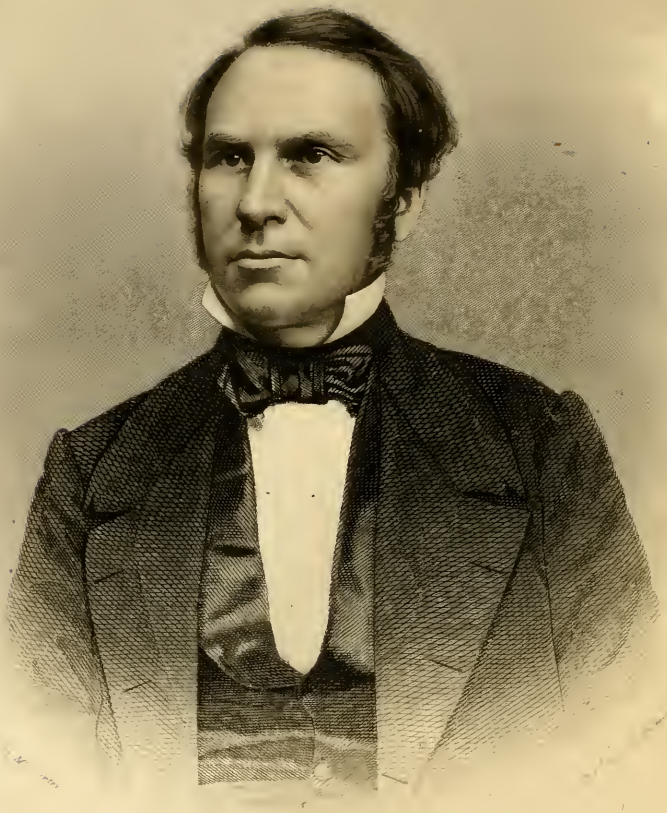
Let me warn you, my Christian friend, to watch vigilantly against the entrance of prejudice into your heart. A very small matter may sometimes give it entrance, and, once entered, it poisons the whole fountain of thought and feeling within you. It disorders the soul's vision, and gives a wrong aspect to everything on which we gaze. If you expect to obtain forgiveness, you must exercise it towards others; otherwise, the petition in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive me as I forgive," invokes a fearful curse upon thee. Oh! beware of prejudice! If it hath found a lodgment in thy heart, never rest till it is driven from thy bosom. Do not dare to sleep with it rankling in thy heart, lest there be an awakening in a world where mercy and pardon are unknown. Many—oh, how many!—begin their backslidings there. Cultivate kindly feelings for all; pray for all; do good to all; so shalt thou prosper.

One more warning, and that closes these warnings. Thousands perish from the home and family of God, because they are at ease in Zion. They wish to steal softly and quietly to heaven, with as few crosses as possible, and as little work. They are unwilling to work for God; hence they are always full of excuses or apologies for neglecting their duties. Sometimes they plead want of talent, want of influence, their great diffidence; but He who searches the heart knows that all these are hollow and insincere—mere subterfuges for

neglecting duty to God or our fellows. But let no man deceive himself. God is not mocked. You must be willing to do all your duty, or you will backslide, as sure as you live. No; your only safety is in a prompt and earnest and thorough casting all at the feet of your Redeemer. Jesus looks upon you, backslider, as He did on backslidden Peter. Oh, go out, like Peter, and weep bitterly. But do you say, "I have no feeling on the subject of salvation; how can I attempt a return to the Good and Merciful?" For that reason, thou shouldst without delay begin thy return to God. Thy hardness will increase, the longer thy return is delayed. The continuance of thy heart and lip and life rebellions has no tendency to soften the heart, or cause the outgushing of deep and honest and hearty repentance. Come, then, at once. If you feel, come; and if your heart is as hard as the nether millstone, come, under the convictions of judgment and understanding. The command, the invitation of God to you, is, "Return; take with you words of confession, and words of pleading intercession. Break off from thy sins, and from thy ungodly associations." Give them up, though pleasant and dear to you as a right hand or a right eye. Your associates must to a great extent be changed, or all is lost. Return at once to the church of God. Take the precious Bible as your daily companion; restore again your long-neglected family altar, and let prayer—ardent, earnest, and importunate—again ascend to God; resume the discharge of every duty; and, as it may be that you have lost many of the best years of your life, now that your eyes are once more open, try as far as possible to make up lost time. Make the effort honestly and perseveringly, and you will surely succeed; God's word of promise insures you success.

The history of returning backsliders in every age of the church is full of instruction. Witness the case of poor apostate Peter. How grievously did he apostatize! And yet Jesus gave him not up to perish. Think of that heart-breaking look his Lord gave him—and he has given thee many such; and now, poor alien from peace and joy and holiness and God, follow Peter's weeping example. Go out, weep, repent, turn away from thy sins, and Jesus will cast another look—even one of pity, of tenderness—and His words to thee will be words of forgiveness. He will say to thee; "Be whole of this thy leprosy. Go in peace, but sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." Consecrate thyself anew to God. Go, work with all thy might to undo the mischief which thy backslidings have inflicted

upon society. Go, weep over those whom thou didst lead astray, and never rest till thou hast brought them back into the good ways of the Lord. And do thou watch and pray more vigilantly and earnestly than ever, lest thou again be led astray. Let thy past experience be a warning to thee; and may God so preserve and keep thee, that thou fall not into sin any more!



P. D. Gurley

CHRIST THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.

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I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.—*John*, xiv, 6.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. But those passages of Scripture which shed light upon the character of Jesus, and upon the method of salvation by His name, are of surpassing interest, and demand our most careful regard and study. Such a passage is the one before us: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." This is the language of Jesus respecting Himself. If the question be, Where is the way that will lead perishing sinners to the Father and to heaven? He answers, "I am the way." If the question be, Where is the truth that can guide us along that way till we reach the high and glorious termination? He answers, "I am the truth." And if the question be, Where is the power that can raise us from the death of sin, so that we shall be able to see that truth, and to walk in that way? again He answers, "I am the life." Surely these are high claims. But the Son of God had a right to make them. By many mighty miracles, and, above all, by rising from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion, He proved beyond a doubt the Divinity of His mission, the truth of His testimony, and the validity of all His pretensions. We need, therefore, have no misgivings while He stands before us, and addresses us in the words of the text. The declaration is true. Upon that we may rely. Our chief concern should be, that we may rightly understand and faithfully apply and improve it. To aid you in so doing shall be the principal object of this discourse. What, then, does the Lord Jesus mean when He says, "I am the way?" I answer:

1. He is the way to heaven by *the doctrine* which He teaches.

He has shown us in His teachings, and shown us clearly, as no other teacher ever did, what principles we must embrace, what feelings we must cultivate, what objects we must pursue, and what kind of a life we must lead, if we would reach the house of His Father and the home of the blessed. Professions without piety, forms of religion without the substance, adhering to externals and neglecting the heart, cleaving to our own merits instead of trusting in Him, tithing mint, anise, and cummin, and omitting judgment, mercy, and faith—this He has told us is the way to perdition, but not to salvation; the way to hell, but not to heaven. While, on the other hand, the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, repentance towards God and faith in Himself as the Saviour, purity of heart and a life bearing the impress of love to God and our neighbor—these, He has told us, are the preparation we must seek, if we would sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of glory. This is plain and faithful instruction. No one need misunderstand it. It is level to the capacity of a child. And because He has so spoken, we say He is the way to heaven by His *doctrine*. He teaches men the true way, as opposed to the false and misleading paths that would conduct them down to ruin.

2. Secondly—Jesus is the way to heaven by His *death*. There were legal obstacles in the way of our return to our Father's face and favor. We had offended His infinite majesty; we had incurred His infinite displeasure. We had broken that law which is holy, and just, and good. We were exposed to its awful penalty; and that penalty inflicted in its fullness would have sunk us to the world of despair, and held us there forever. What, then, was done for our rescue? Jesus interposed for us. He said, Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. And how did He ransom us? *He gave Himself for us.* Taking our nature into personal union with His Divinity, He became our substitute and surety. He stood in our place. He assumed our legal liabilities. He obeyed the precepts of the law in our stead. He endured the penalty of the law in our stead. Yes, He obeyed, and He suffered—obeyed and suffered as the accepted substitute of sinners, till the violated law was honored, the claims of justice were met, and God, for His sake, without tarnishing any perfection of His character or compromising any principle of His government, could offer us terms of pardon and make us the heirs of glory. It was thus, my hearers, that

the mighty barriers were removed which prevented our return to happiness and God. That removal was the price of blood. It cost the humiliation, the obedience, the agony, and the ignominious death of Him, who, though He was God's equal, consented to become our brother; nay, more—consented to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It is with reference to all this that He says to us to-day, "I am the way." He means, not only that He has shown us the way to heaven by His teachings, but that *He has opened it by His death.*

3. Again—Jesus is the way to heaven by His *example.* It is true, we need preceptive instruction to give us light, and we need the efficacy of a sin-atoning sacrifice to give us access to God; but we need more than these: we need to have before us the life of One, who, in our nature, without defilement or deviation, has trod the rugged pathway to heaven, and in so doing has gone before us, and shown our feet the way. This priceless boon we have. The life of the incarnate Son of God is a model life, beautiful, stainless, perfect, which every candidate for bliss within the vail is required to study and to imitate. By sojourning in this vale of sin and sorrow for more than thirty years, finishing His work, and then returning to His Father, He has taught us how to live, and taught us what sort of a life is *our* best and truest preparation for going to the Father.

And what is the force of that teaching, its method and its drift? I answer, It shows us One who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" One who, from the beginning to the end of His earthly pilgrimage, devoted Himself to the glory of God and the highest welfare of humanity; One who "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil;" One who was ever diligent in His work, devotional in His habits, humble in spirit and deportment, patient in tribulation, forbearing towards His enemies, a stranger to revenge, a pattern of self-denial, the helper of the needy, the instructor of the ignorant, the comforter of the afflicted, the loving, suffering, dying friend of sinners—I say, it shows us such an One, holds Him up before us in a most clear and impressive light, bids us commune with His history till we imbibe His very spirit, and assures us that the more closely we conform to Him in feeling and deportment, the more sure and reliable is our moral preparation for the blessedness of heaven. In reading the

narratives of the Evangelists, we see more than the teachings of Jesus, more than the death of Jesus; we see His life, and

> "In that life the law appears,
> Drawn out in living characters."

"Follow me," He says, pointing to His own clear and radiant pathway—radiant with the light of meekness, purity, and love—"I am the way." Ah, now we understand Him; He is not only the way to heaven by His teachings, and by His death, but He is also the way by His bright and perfect example. Oh, that there were an heart in every one of us to say,

> "His track I see, and I'll pursue,
> The narrow way, till Him I view."

But we must pass on to our second inquiry: What does Jesus mean when He says, "I am the truth?" I answer—He is the truth because He is the substance of all the typical shadows, and the accomplishment of all the prophecies and promises of a Saviour, which we find in the Old Testament. No matter what these types, and prophecies, and promises, may be, or what the extent and value of the "good things" they prefigured and predicted, all, all are realized in Him. He is the *true* medium of intercourse between earth and heaven, of which Jacob's ladder was the type. He is the *true* lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, of which the Paschal lamb was the type. He is the *true* propitiatory sacrifice, of which the Mosaic sacrifices were the type. He is the *true* High Priest and Intercessor, of which the Levitical high priests were the type. And He is the *true* object of faith, the true source of spiritual healthfulness and healing, of which the brazen serpent was the type. He is the "Shiloh," whom Jacob predicted; the "Prophet," whom Moses predicted; the "Prince of Peace," whom Isaiah predicted; the "Lord our Righteousness," whom Jeremiah predicted; the royal "David," whom Ezekiel predicted; the "Messiah," whom Daniel predicted; the "Branch," whom Zachariah predicted; and the "Desire of all nations," whom Haggai and Malachi predicted. He is the fulfilment of all that the ancient Prophets announced respecting Him that should come to be "the glory of Israel," and "a light to lighten the Gentiles." Did they say He should be born in Bethlehem? There Jesus was born. Did they say He should be descended from the family of David according to the flesh? Such was His descent. Did they say He should be despised and rejected of

men? So He was despised and rejected. Did they say He should be led as a lamb to the slaughter? So He, a meek and patient sufferer, was led to the death of the Cross. Did they say He should not be left under the power of death—should not be permitted to see corruption? This was fulfilled in the case of Jesus. The third day He rose. Did they say He should see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied; that a seed should serve Him; and that the Lord would send the rod of His strength out of Zion? It is so done, even to this very day. His sufferings are rewarded in many lands; His converts are multiplying as the drops of the morning; and the rod of His strength, the Word of His grace and salvation, is converting and redeeming the world. We repeat it, then—Christ is the truth in this most interesting and important sense: He is the substance of all the typical shadows, and the fulfilment of all the inspired predictions and promises of a Saviour.

But He is the truth in another sense. He is the source of truth—the great Prophet of the church, whose revelations are that testimony, full and infallible, by believing and obeying which, sinners come through Him "the way" to the Father and to heaven. We need something to guide us every day—something to show us our enemies, that we may avoid and resist them—something to warn us of our dangers, that we may flee and escape them—something to set before us the objects of legitimate pursuit, that we may seek and secure them—the objects of legitimate affection and trust, that we may love and embrace them—something to tell us what spirit we must exhibit, what aims we must cherish, what excellences we must cultivate, what hopes we must entertain, and what duties we must perform, that we may attain to glory, honor, and immortality. In other words, we need an infallible rule of faith and practice; and Christ, in His Word, is that rule. He is the Amen, the true and faithful Witness. The Bible is His testimony. As our great Teacher, He has given it to us for our guidance and our good. It tells us truly and unmistakably "what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us." It comes to us through his hands as Mediator, as one of the fruits of His gracious interposition; and its every utterance bears the impress of His mediatorial faithfulness and love. Christ speaks in these Oracles, from the beginning to the end of the volume—speaks as our Monitor and Guide—speaks with an accuracy that never errs, and with a fidelity that never fal-

ters—speaks for our benefit, for our direction, that we may find and pursue the way to heaven. And hence it is that, in exhibiting to us His own character, His transcendent claims upon our confidence, He says, "I am the truth;" I am the great centre and source of that true light, the light of Revelation, which alone can guide earth's guilty and benighted wanderers home.

But Christ is more than the way to heaven—more than the light of truth to show us the way; He is the *life*. He has life in Himself, and He is the author of spiritual and eternal life to all who put their trust in Him. Those whom He saves are by nature the children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins. In this condition, the Gospel finds them. They have ears, but they hear not; eyes have they, but they see not. They are told the way to heaven, but they are listless and stupid. The great and precious truths of the Gospel are urged upon them with affectionate fidelity, but they feel no interest, they exhibit no concern. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. What, then, is the first great want of the perishing sinner? *Life, life, spiritual life.* Life must be imparted before the eye can see, or the ear can hear, or the heart can feel. And who gives life but the Prince of Life? He intercedes for His chosen, even when they are dead in sin. He prays that they may be regenerated. That prayer is heard; and lo! the Holy Spirit descends upon them with almighty quickening energy, and, in an instant, they spring into life. Old things pass away, and all things become new. Then they see the way, and they begin to walk in it. Then they hear the truth, they understand it, and they begin to make it their rejoicing and their guide. Then they are alive unto God; but how? Through the intercession of Him who has said to them, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Regeneration, the beginning of spiritual life in the soul, is, in every instance, a fruit of the Lord Jesus' mediation—an answer to His prayer. And, then, how is that life perpetuated and advanced? Still in answer to the prayer of Jesus, and through the efficacy of His blood. Because He lives, and pleads, and spreads His wounded hands, in heaven, the regenerated believer holds on his way. He grows in grace; he triumphs over the world; he presses onward and upward; he runs; he rises; he ripens for glory within the vail. Why? There is a hidden bond uniting him to One who has said, "I am the life." His life is hid *with Christ* in God. There is a hidden Intercessor who prays

for him daily, and prevails—prays, not that he may be taken out of the world, but that he may be kept from the evil. There is a hidden source of grace, and strength, and comfort, and blessing, with which he is connected, as the branch with the vine; that source is "the fullness" that dwells in Jesus. By faith and prayer he draws upon that fullness continually; and there lies the secret of his growth in grace, and perseverance therein to the end. Because Jesus lives, he lives. True, the body dies, and sees corruption; but in the grave it is still united to Him who is "the resurrection and the life," and, for this reason, it can only remain there for a season. The blood and advocacy of Jesus avail even to the opening of the graves of His people. In Him "shall all be made alive," and with soul and body reunited, purged from the last stain of sin, and adorned with "the beauty of holiness," they shall go up together to the employments and the rest of the redeemed. And how shall it be with them there? Through the endless ages, their vital union with Jesus will continue. Through the endless ages, His sin-atoning merits and His ever-prevailing intercession will be their security. And with reference to all that bright, and glorious, and immortal future which is before them, it will ever be said by all who know their history, their relations, and their indebtedness to the Son of God, Because He lives, they shall live also. Surely not less than all this, my hearers, does the Saviour intend to teach us, when He says to us in the Scriptures, and says to us by His servants, and says to us by our own experience and hope of His mercy, and says to us by the Cross, and through deeply and touchingly significant sacramental symbols of His own appointment, "I am the life."

You perceive, therefore, that the passage before us is radiant with light and mercy. It gives us just the instruction, and just the encouragement, and just the word of warning and guidance, which we need. Sin has darkened our minds. In our natural estate, we are wanderers from holiness and heaven. Jesus meets us in our wanderings, assures us of His interest in our welfare, shows us what we must do and where we must go if we would find our true destination, pours the radiance of His own ineffable character and doctrine upon our souls, and says to us, Give up the false views and principles that have been hitherto misleading you; sit at my feet; confide in my instructions; "I am the way." But *then* we see that sin is more than darkness; it is guilt, impurity, cor-

ruption—a barrier to communion with God—a high and fearful wall of separation between His favor and our souls. Who shall remove the barrier? Who shall demolish the separating wall? Jesus does it by His death. He becomes our sin-atoning sacrifice. Trust in my merits, He exclaims, and your iniquities shall be remembered against you no more. "I am the way." I not only show you the way to the Father, but I remove the obstacles, that you may walk therein and be saved. But when we have seen the right road, and the obstacles to our entering upon it have been removed, and our feet are inclining towards it, we are ready to say, Oh, what a help it would be to us, if we had some bright and perfect pattern of a holy life to be ever before us as a stimulus and a guide. Such a pattern do I give you, says the Saviour. "Follow Me;" I am the way by My example. But then we find that we need more than the light and help of such an example. We need verbal instruction, line upon line, and precept upon precept. Even this want is met, says the Saviour, for "I am the truth;" I am the substance of the Old Testament shadows; I am the fulfilment of its predictions; the whole of Divine Revelation relates to Me, points to Me, comes from Me; and I offer it to you, that it may be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. But then another difficulty meets us, more serious and formidable than all the rest. While we listen to the Saviour's doctrine, distinguishing the true way to heaven from every other; while we contemplate His atonement, levelling and removing every barrier; while we see His holy example beckoning us onward and upward; and while we hold in our hands the sacred Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Him: behold! what is our real condition? We are spiritually dead—dead to the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, the claims of God, and the realities of eternity. How, then, can we move? How can we arise and go to the Father? We need some new principle in our very hearts—some living, vital force, that shall quicken our faculties, break our fatal slumbers, raise us from the deep long death of sin, and urge and impel us onward to duty and to God. And even this, says the Saviour, I am able to bestow, for "I am the life." I proffer you the renewing of the Holy Ghost. I promise you perpetual access to My own infinite fullness. I give unto you eternal life, and you shall never perish. I will redeem you from the corruption of sin, and through everlasting ages the promise shall be gloriously verified,

that, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Oh, my hearers, these are great and precious revelations. The eternal Son of God, "He of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write," has verily come to us, perishing, guilty sinners, on an errand of mercy—come with the clearest credentials—and what has He said? "I am the way" to the Father and to heaven. I *show* you the way; I *open* to you the way. "I am the truth;" I give you just the light you need, and all the light you need, to direct you *in* that way. "I am the life;" I offer you spiritual quickening, the redemption of the body, and then eternal preservation, security, and blessedness, beyond the reach of sin and sorrow. What a message is this to be received from such a source, by such sinful, erring, dying creatures as we are! A message of great joy, indeed! If we improve it, it will save us; but if we undervalue and neglect it, it will but aggravate our ruin.

The great question of questions for us all is this: Are we going to the Father—going to His glorious and blissful presence, as our everlasting home? Not by our own wisdom, our own righteousness, our own efforts, can we reach that blessed destination. He who came from that presence, and returned to it again, has said—and they are words that should sink down into our hearts—"No man cometh unto the Father but by *Me*." You can go elsewhere, my hearers, without Christ. You can go to the servitude of sin, and to the vanities of the world, without Christ. You can go far, far away from all your truest interests and all your most urgent and momentous duties, without Christ. You can go down, down to lower depths of darkness, and impenitence, and unbelief, and sin, without Christ. You can go to a cheerless sick bed, and a hopeless death, and a terrifying judgment seat, and a wretched eternity, without Christ. But if you would turn your face in the other direction; if you would aspire to a brighter destiny; if you would rise to the soul's true rest, the bosom of your Father and your God; then you must hear and heed the declaration of the Son of God, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Rely upon it, this Jesus whom we preach is the ladder by which you must climb to heaven; He is the truth that must direct you in your upward progress; and He is the life that must quicken, and animate, and sustain, and preserve you, to the end of your journey and forever. Shall He be *your* way, *your* light, *your* life—or will you turn away from Him, and reject Him, and wander on and perish? My brethren, *is* Christ *our* way, our light, our life? and are we actually

going to heaven, by the guidance of His Word, the efficacy of His atonement, and the vitalizing power of His Spirit. Oh, then, let us be thankful unto Him, and bless His name forever. Let us cleave to Him with a fonder affection, and rely upon Him with a firmer confidence, and serve Him with a warmer and a more unreserved devotion to His person and His cause. Nor let it seem to be among the least of our precious privileges, that from time to time we are permitted to sit together at His table, and to do this in remembrance of Him whom we *do* delight to remember and to honor as the Way, the Truth, and the Life—by whom, as we humbly hope and believe, we are going to the rest of the ransomed—going to the very fountain of blessedness—*going to the Father.*

J. A. Holtz

INDIVIDUAL MORAL INFLUENCE.

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Judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.—*Romans*, xiv, 13.

Various and multiplied are the forms of illustration in which Holy Scripture has exhibited the course and character of human life. The fields of nature have been explored, and the wealth of imagination exhausted, to furnish metaphors of evanescence, of vicissitude, and of restlessness; insomuch, that he whose mind has become familiarized with the scriptural similitudes which portray life and its changes, sees presented as in a picture, and at every step in the progress of existence, mementoes of his duty, and warnings of perils; and voices from the earth, from the air, and from the waters, reach him frequently and impressively with the admonition, "Behold, O man! see here thy pictured life."

Amidst this rich variety of figurative illustration, there is not one more apposite, or oftener presented, than that which paints human life under the semblance of a pilgrimage, and man as a wayfarer on its short and changeful road. Some of these serve to exhibit single features of the object; they impress the mind with but one characteristic similitude. But in this text there is a general analogy of idea. It summons at once the combined images of a connected allegory. The mind perceives and traces easily a resemblance to many particulars. "Let no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

Influenced by the ordinary habits of our age and country, our fancy is apt to fill up the picture of life's pilgrimage with a single traveller wending his solitary way. But this, as we may learn from the text, is not the scriptural idea We must conceive the figure as

it appeared to the mind of the inspired writer, and, so conceiving it, we shall find it invested with new beauty and additional propriety. Among the nations of the East, the principal routes of travel and trade are, as you are aware, over land. Extended between the points of chief resort, there are commonly vast deserts, arid and inhospitable climes, infested by predatory communities, which ever since the dawn of history have subsisted by rapine—"their hands being against every man, and every man's hand against them." For these reasons, the usual method of travelling in those lands has always been in large companies, for the sake of mutual protection and assistance. Consequently, we are to conceive of human life, in the idea of the Apostle, as a pilgrimage which many pursue together; a vast and innumerable caravan, moving on in one long-extended and never-pausing column to the silent realms of shade. But we must remember that, unlike other pilgrimages, the destination in this case is constantly in view, the arrival uncertain as to time, but sure in the event. Death, like a narrow stream, divides us from the unknown and untravelled regions to which we pass. The way tends along the shore of a vast and limitless ocean, while before and behind us are many who are summoned ever and anon to embark. Often we see the wretched survive the fortunate, the feeble as often wrap the athletic in his shroud; decrepid age still totters along its way, while the young and vigorous form that sustained it is dragged down from its support. And we must also remember, that though the progress is in a crowd, the arrival of each pilgrim is nevertheless solitary and alone. The last downward leap into the gloom is the way of all the earth; but it is a way which each one must adventure unsupported and unattended by any earthly companion. It is but to do what at the very moment, among the myriads of the peopled earth, a thousand and a thousand more among the pilgrim multitudes must do also. The little companies which have been gathered along the journey by the ties of consanguinity or of friendship, or clustered into family groups, must be broken up, must separate, called one by one in succession to that long and dreary voyage that must be made in loneliness. The last look is caught, the last tender farewell spoken, which cheers the summoned spirit ere it puts forth into that viewless world from which no voyager ever comes back, and a void is visible in the surviving band, which in the turmoil of the crowding multitudes is soon filled up and forgotten! In such a pilgrimage, to which the text has evi-

dent allusion, the mind of every wayfarer should be awake to the momentous warning: "Let no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way;" for in that common journey, that vast and reckless caravan of souls, the progress of each must be aided or impeded by his fellows.

From every heart there proceed influences, more or less powerful, which radiate and entwine with other hearts. Soul acts and reacts upon soul, and the spark which fires a single breast is conveyed like electricity to surrounding bosoms. The present happiness and future destiny of every individual depend in a very great measure on the character and force of the external influences acting on his mind from the minds of others. Man is a social animal; often he debases his nature to a character rather gregarious than social, by yielding his own better thoughts to the evil impulses of the mass; or by blindly following the lead of some fellow worm, whom his foolish idolatry has elevated into the place of a divinity. In this latter aspect, the features of man's moral constitution, which we are now considering, assume a humiliating and even a degrading prominence. All the great revolutions in human society have been brought about mainly through the influence and activity of a few individuals. The annals of the world exhibit the actions of only a small number; and all the important events of its history, which are strewn along a track of about six thousand years, would be necessarily recounted in giving the biography of some six hundred persons. The three greatest empires of the earth began with the manhood of Cyrus, Alexander, and Tamerlane, and crumbled into pieces with the dust of their founders.

On the confines of civilized Europe, a little more than a century ago, the now mighty empire of Russia was regarded and spoken of as a country unexplored and barbarous. It had scarcely a name in history, and was hardly numbered among the nations. It was a sort of loose aggregation of savage tribes, held under some restraint by the fiercest and most powerful of them, called Muscovites, but politically and commercially almost as remote from the world's ken, from the observation of the keen-sighted spirit of trade, as the ice-bound coasts of Wilkes's land, or the interior and sun-scorched plains of Africa. A native prince of the Romanoff family, reared in the midst of feuds and scenes of contention and blood, PETER ALEXIOWITZKI by name, with little to sustain him besides his own trusty

sword and indomitable spirit, conceived the noble but apparently hopeless design of elevating his country in the scale of nations. He travelled abroad to acquire knowledge in the prosecution of his purpose. He went to London, to learn the complex operations of government, finance, and commerce. He wrought at the trade of a ship carpenter, in the naval yards of Saardam, in Holland. In short, he left no efforts untried and no opportunities unemployed to perfect himself in all the arts of government, that he might meliorate the condition of his rude subjects, improve their social character, and raise their political state. He invited men of learning and of skill in all the arts of life to settle in Russia, and by their well-rewarded labors to aid his own endeavors. Now, contemplate for a moment the results following upon the persevering exertions of an individual. The silent rivers and widespread lakes of Muscovy were suddenly made white with the sails of trade—her vast plains were covered with waving crops of golden grain—the magnificent city of St. Petersburg, with its marble palaces, arose magic-like out of the icy swamps of the Neva—a powerful navy issued from the unfrequented ports of the frozen Baltic—in the thick darkness of ignorance, institutions of learning were lighted up, like beacon flames, to dispel the gloom and shadows that had brooded over a land of barbarism and cruelty, and Europe was astonished by the sudden apparition of a gigantic sovereignty, with its powerful and disciplined armies, its numerous and well-appointed fleets, entering into a fierce conflict with the veteran troops of Sweden, headed by Charles XII, and, after a struggle of twenty-one years, finally crushing him upon the bloody field of Pultowa. More than this: Peter laid the foundations of an empire, and by his wise policy so consolidated its resources and strength as to enable it single-handed to meet and drive back the great captain of modern times, at the head of victorious legions that had gathered laurels in nearly every country of Europe. And in our own times we have seen Russia braving the banded nations of the Old World, which, having felt the power of her arms, now look upon her grasping ambition with trouble, and regard her expanding proportions with unconcealed dread.

Take another more recent but no less illustrative and striking example.

About eighty years ago, an obscure and untitled boy was studying mathematics at the military school of Brienne, in France. In a little

while, that youth, having ripened into manhood, was raised by the frantic devotion of his fellow beings almost to the pinnacle of universal rule. Alike on the burning sands of Syria and in the mountain defiles of Spain, beneath the shadows of the Pyramids of Egypt and amid the drifting snows of Russia, the altar of his ambition reeked with holocausts of human sacrifice, until made captive, as it were, by an assembled world, he was conveyed to a sterile rock island in mid ocean, and there watched by trained sentinels and guarded by armed fleets! And why? Because his personal influence over the minds of his fellow men was a spell so potent and tremendous, that the stamp of his foot on the soil of Europe would have raised legions of armed men to do his bidding of slaughter and death, and from the yet warm ashes of past conflagrations the fires of desolation would have again been kindled and swept over a war-wasted world. These may be, perhaps, regarded as extreme instances to illustrate the power and force of individual moral influence. But in all other departments of human thought and action, the same characteristic prevails. Persons are the springs, and names are the watchwords, of all human efforts. A name is often, with men, the *prestige* of success in the most difficult and desperate enterprises. It will rouse men to the most determined exertions, it will support them under the most cruel sufferings, it will cheer them in the hour of death. What's in a name? does any one ask? Let the bleeding and dying corporal of the old guard on the field of Waterloo, in his reply to the British surgeon, who, in removing a shattered rib from near his heart, asked, Where is the Emperor? answer the question. "Cut an inch deeper, sir, and you will find him"—meaning, of course, in his heart. What's in a name? There is that in it which challenges the reverence and the homage of heaven and earth. For "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!" In politics, in letters, even in religion, the authority of a name is often more influential and convincing than an argument; and the individual to whom Providence has accorded such intellectual sway, Providence will hold accountable, not only for his own faults and errors, but, so far as these have affected the interests of others, for the faults and errors of peoples, sects, and generations of mankind. It is not the heathen mythology only that affords examples of the apotheosis of human

nature. The altar smokes with sacrifice long after the idol has become dust; and the dicta of the oracle are law to its votaries, long after the lips that uttered them are silent in death. Statues are erected in their honor, institutions are decorated with their names, orations are pronounced in their eulogy, and pilgrimages are made to their tombs. As years roll on, their fame, instead of fading, gathers a more reverend lustre, and on each anniversary of their birth the air rings with the shouts of rejoicing thousands, and the welkin is rent with the thunders of artillery.

The bearing of such extensive and powerful influences on the moral and religious welfare of human society is too conspicuous to require development or to call for argument. But in the aspect which most demands our attention, which falls legitimately within the scope of remark proper from the pulpit—for what are all other interests, compared with the interests of eternity?—the principle in question displays not its most important operation in those celebrated and notorious examples of individual influence to which reference was just now made. The man whose authority and example have degraded the moral sentiment and impeded the religious melioration of his age and country, has committed acts of turpitude and inflicted injury enough to weigh down more than all the political and literary merit that can be claimed for him by his veriest idolaters. Mental impressions are often enfeebled by the distance of the agent that produces them; but moral impressions are more forcible in proportion to the familiarity and contiguity of the productive cause.

Thus, in literature, men render the homage of their admiration to genius, but they are most attracted by characters which come into close and sympathetic intercourse with the heart of the reader. We admire Byron. We love Wordsworth. Than the former, a more brilliant star has not shed its light upon the horizon of letters in modern times. But it was a wandering star, dazzling by its splendor, throwing off coruscations in its wayward course, that led men to gaze, and, while gazing and admiring, to tremble, as at the appearance of something strange, unearthly, and to fear that, like the flash from the dark bosom of the thunder-cloud, it might blast and destroy them. With Wordsworth, we feel that it would have been a blessed privilege to sit down with him on the margin of his own Windemere, which he loved, with its smooth and glassy waters, and in the silence of the evening, when the stars began to look down from their

watch-towers, or in the bright and glorious morning, amid the hum of insects and the carols of birds, and under bright clouds floating on the deep blue seas above, hear him discourse of God's goodness, God's mercy, and God's love—of man's dependence, man's duties, and man's destiny! Byron's was unsanctified genius; his splendid endowments unconsecrated but to selfish ends and the diabolical purpose of corrupting his kind. And of all devices put in operation by the cunning of the devil for the demoralization and ruin of men, there is not, perhaps, one so subtle, so disguised, and so effectual, as that which seeks first to debauch the mind in order to deprave the conduct—to pollute the heart in order to degrade the person. This is fearfully and shockingly exemplified in the character of our ephemeral literature—in those light productions which the press throws off yearly by hundreds of thousands of pages, and which are to be found at all the thoroughfares of the country, at the railroad depots of our large cities, at the principal steamboat landings, and in the hands of all the news-mongers and vendors of novels and novelettes throughout the land. Whatever the taste may be, or whatever the fancy to be gratified, appropriate food is provided for its indulgence, from the marvellous and the beautiful, to the terrible, the atrocious, and the horrible, presented in pictures for the eye, songs for the ear, and narratives for the mind. And thus, with the vast majority of the young who travel—who seek amusement at places of fashionable concourse, and whose unoccupied hours are given up to this kind of reading—life is divested of all reality; sober, serious reflection is banished; the lessons of experience are lost upon them; the voice of conscience is stifled; they live on present enjoyment, and revel in anticipation in scenes of coming bliss, and thus become trained in mind and heart to adopt any sentiments, and fall easy and almost unresisting victims to the arts of the profligate and the designing.

A few months since, I met with a young man on his way to join General Walker in Nicaragua, who said that that daring adventurer and fomenter of revolutions for freedom's sake would never again visit the United States, unless he came at the head of a victorious army through the conquered domains of the Montezumas; that it was his purpose thus to return to overthrow this Republic, erect on its ruins the most glorious throne on which men had ever gazed, and establish here a Government to rule the world. What though this be, in our estimation, the veriest rodomontade? It shows in what

vagaries of imagination the youthful mind of the country indulges, and in what fancies it disports. Certainly they are not more extravagant than were the day-dreams of Napoleon's boyhood, which contemplated Constantinople as the capital of an empire whose glories should eclipse the splendors of all preceding dynasties, and more than realize the magnificent creations of Eastern romance. There are doubtless thousands, now in this land, burning with the ambition which fired the breast of Napoleon Bonaparte, and who, if opportunity favored, would, like him, wade through seas of blood, and trample thousands into the dust of death, if they might thus grasp the sceptre of power, and place a diadem on their brows. Happily for the peace of the world, there are few Napoleons among the many actuated by the like or an equal ambition. But if, in the common road of life, there be truth in the beautiful fancy of the poet, that "full many a flower is born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air," never attaining the notoriety necessary to gain intellectual influence and eminence, it is also true, on the other hand, and the observation of almost every man verifies the fact, that full many a weed of society, low, nauseous, pestiferous, unsung by the satirist, unnoted on the records of published villainy, flourishing unregarded and rotting unmissed and forgotten, has infused poison and poured ruin into hearts within the natural circle of its baleful influence, to an extent and degree that effectually counteracted the opposite efforts of men who have toiled and wrought diligently in the tasks of philanthropy, and thus striven, by doing good, to gain an honored and enduring remembrance. Yes, it is indeed a humiliating and disheartening thought, that the honest and faithful herald of the Cross, whose days of labor and weariness, and nights of study and prayer, are devoted to the extension of his Master's kingdom, and before whom are congregated every Sunday, for the very purpose on which he is sent, those same hearts which he seeks to impress and influence—may strive faithfully in his labor of love, and yet strive in vain—may persevere through long years of patient self-denial, and live on through despondency and the sickening process of hope deferred, and feel the spirit dying in his heart, and the marrow drying up in his bones, and yet effect less for the promotion of holiness among men—by his stated public and professional exertions—by his admonitions, expostulations, and reproofs—by the purity of his life—by his exemplary deportment and godly conversation—*than* is witnessed in

the magnitude and extent of the harm wrought in the same community by one emissary of Satan, seeking the gratification of his own gross and depraved appetites—pandering to the corrupt inclinations and low propensities of the vulgar crew of which he is the leader, and thus plunging souls into perdition by the fatal influence of his wretched principles, and by the death-doing mischief of his ruinous example. The influence of this moral contagion, which is so easily communicated in the circumstances in which we find human society, can scarcely be over-estimated. In our country, especially, almost every man can gain some measure of influence; and no matter what may be his opinions upon any subject—morals, religion, politics—through the tremendous power of the press he can speedily scatter them, broadcast through the land, from Maine to Georgia, from Virginia to California. It is something which demands the most serious attention of every man who loves his country, his family, and his kind. It is the mighty agent in transmitting and circulating through a thousand channels, swelling into resistless torrents the great stream of human depravity. It is, to every soul among us, the just occasion of deep anxiety and painful care. It is the parent of solemn duties, the stimulus to constant and wakeful vigilance, the source of burdensome responsibilities. It ought to be the provocative of earnest effort, the theme of fervent prayer for light, guidance, and help, from on high. Moral impulses, we repeat, are infectious. Philosophy tells us that a stone cast into the ocean communicates an impulse to its waters which is felt on the most distant shore washed by its waves, and that a word spoken makes an impression on our atmosphere coextensive with its limits. The idea is a grand one for contemplation. It is a more fearful thought to consider, that in the contact of men, throughout the multiform and complicated interlacings of human association, an impression for good or for evil is necessarily and inevitably made upon each other. Wherever there is intercourse between man and man, there is incurred a reciprocal moral responsibility, corresponding in degree to the intimacy of that intercourse, and proportioned to the force of the circumstances which create the influence. Thus the principles and practice of parents tell most powerfully upon the character and conduct of their children. The care and influence of teachers generally give shape to the future destiny of their pupils. The intimacies of friendship impart complexion to the deportment, as exhibited on the theatre of life; and those elevated, by wealth, tal-

cnts, and power, to high social positions, become the guides and examples of others in humbler conditions and less conspicuous stations. Through all these ramifications of the social state, this moral responsibility exists; and there is no possible escape from it, unless men flee from the converse of their fellows, and seek refuge, like anchorites, in the caverns of the mountains or the deserts of the earth.

Men, therefore, who are morally diseased, are as justly accountable for the moral corruption with which they taint the social atmosphere—by their language, their conduct, or their writings—as responsible for the contagion which they communicate to other hearts, scattering around them, with thoughtless levity, "arrows, firebrands, and death," as the physically diseased, who, with fiendish malignity, seek to spread their own loathsomeness through the community.

The practical bearing of these remarks will not be misunderstood, I am persuaded, by those for whose benefit their delivery is chiefly intended. Some one has written, that "if there be a period in man's brief but eventful pilgrimage, more than another, at which perils surround him, when the passions are strong for evil or for good, when the mind is powerfully susceptible to virtuous or to vicious impressions and impulses, that is the brief period which connects youth with manhood, that bridges the narrow gulf between the docile disciple and the man who is, or conceives himself to be, now his own master. Just as in summer, it is said, there are a few days which determine the condition of the coming harvest. If the sun then shines bright and warm, the juices are matured and consolidated, and made ready for the autumn. But if cold and withering mildews descend, a few hours destroy the fair progress of months, and the lovely prospect of spring is at once and forever blasted; and the havoc is all the more apparent in proportion to the amount of herbage and verdure over which the ungenial winds have swept their deadly course. So, too, a few years—it may be months, nay days, with many—have accomplished the fatal work, when the instructions of youthful days were uprooted. Whilst men were asleep, the ever-wakeful enemy of God and man has sowed tares broadcast, where wheat had been often strewed. We have seen many a youthful mind, opening with the fair prospect of blossoms ripening into the perfect fruits of righteousness, nursed under the prayerful anxieties of godly parents, and enjoying, too, the advantage of a Christian ministry and an enlightened course of religious instruction, but passing too soon under the

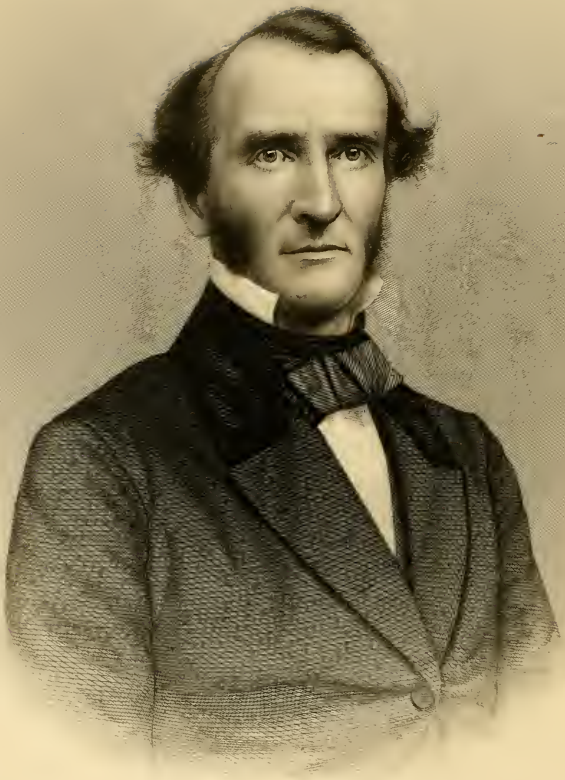
tempest of the world's temptations, become a barren and blasted branch of the social tree

What a disastrous termination is thus seen to mark often the fondest parental hopes, the diligent labors of faithful teachers, the reasonable expectations of loving friends! Can any effort of associated benevolence, or any word of friendly counsel, be misplaced, which seeks to guard the rising generation against results so fatal to themselves, so painful to their friends, so ruinous to the best interests of their country!

Hear the words of the wisest among men:

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace!"

"Now to God the Father," &c.



L. F. Morgan

A QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER, FOR YOUNG MEN.

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Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.—*Psalm*, cxix, 9.

The text consists of two parts.

I. The Question. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?"

II. The Answer. "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."

Of the importance of the question, I shall not speak particularly; that I shall leave to be inferred from its *subject* and its *import*.

1. The subject of the question is the young man.

He has safely passed the perils of infancy and childhood. The flower that was in the bud has unfolded beneath the genial rays of the morning sun, lovely to look upon, and rich in the promise of luxuriant fruit.

There is gladness in the young man's heart, and he needs not to be told by Solomon, to "rejoice in the days of his youth." Joy beams from his countenance. It is the expression to which every feature gives utterance. His sanguine spirit feasts upon the promises of hope, and his glowing fancy invests every prospect of the future with Eden-like enchantment. He is the subject of interest to all; childhood and maturity are in sympathy with him, and even age finds in him an object of attraction, when all else fails to charm. If anything can make an old man wish to be young again, it is the solicitude which he everywhere finds felt for the young man; if anything can reconcile him to the obscurity into which he has retired, or is retiring, it is the solicitude which he, himself, feels for the young man.

The past belonged to our fathers; they are gone. The present is ours, on whom is devolved the responsibility of the living age. The future is to be the young man's. True, many will die without possessing the inheritance; but of those who gain it, their purity of character in time, and their happiness of existence in eternity, depend upon accepting the counsel of my text.

The past died with our fathers, bequeathing its estate to the present; and of the possessions of the present the future is the prospective heir. If this age shall do as much for the future as the past has done for the present, who shall estimate the value of the inheritance awaiting the young man? True, it is only in a limited sense that it can be said that the succeeding age begins where the preceding has left off, and this, in a measure, may account for the tardy progress of humanity toward the intellectual and moral perfection which it is destined to attain. Each proceeds from the same starting point of first principles, and growth depends upon the *facilities* with which the past has furnished the present, and upon the facilities with which the present shall furnish the future. Progress is indefinite, and capacity for its development is that property in man's nature most resembling the Infinite. Our fathers toiled along in travel by horseback, or in lumbering stage coaches, at the rate of four or five miles an hour; without weariness, by steamboat or railroad, we travel twenty. The sixty days required to cross the ocean have been reduced to ten. We all remember when post or express was our swiftest means of communication with distant places. Now, intelligence we wish to convey, can be sent with lightning speed along the telegraphic wires. But, far as were our fathers behind us in these respects, where would we have been, had they not prepared the way for our progress? Do we owe nothing to their science and enterprise? I need not say, if I could estimate it, how much we are indebted to such minds as Fulton and Franklin.

If the present shall furnish to the future, facilities to progress equal to those furnished by the past to the present, what may be expected of the age to come, in which the young man is to be the responsible actor? The future is his sphere; the wealth of the present, his capital. As the future shall become to him the living present, he shall make the investments which shall subsist society, the church, and the nation. These are destined to be what he shall make them.

Can it be a wonder to any, that the young man is an object of interest to all, and especially that the intensest concern should be felt by those to whom belongs the responsibility of the present, whose duty it is to prepare him, as far as education and example can do it, for the progress of society, of the church, and of the nation? The question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" is therefore for them, as well as for him.

2. The import of the question:

It implies the *impurity* of his way, otherwise there could be no propriety in the language employed; for why ask how that shall be cleansed, which is already pure?

True, if we go back over all his way, from its beginning, we find him with Innocence for his companion, shedding her smile of complacence upon him, blessing him with her favor, in his every step through infancy. On to the end of this period, all is well, both as it respects character here and destiny hereafter. Innocence takes care of both, and they are safe in her keeping. But grown to youth, he quits the flowery domain over which she presides. He may not tarry if he would—he would not if he could. He seeks in Education a wiser guide. He tastes in her school of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His eyes are opened, and he discerns that in the journey before him there are two ways, the right and the wrong. Unhesitatingly he approves the former, but, from the moral state of his nature, and the action of Temptation upon it, he pursues the latter. No sooner is the line between childhood and youth past, than the way of impurity is entered upon. That the steps of youth may be so guided, by mere moral training, as always to keep the sinless path along which Innocence guided infancy, is to be regarded as a very great heresy, since its direct effect would be to prevent that conviction of depravity which is the preparation to the work of cleansing the young man's way.

I would not, on any account, disparage Education. I look upon her as an angel from heaven, as from her seat of learning she dispenses the treasures of wisdom, and seeks, by her many appeals to reason, to guide the youthful step in the way of purity. I admit, and do it gladly, to her praise, that she has done much to *restrain* the evil of youthful nature; but ask me not to consent that she can *eradicate* it. I might agree with those who say she can, if Temptation were not more potent than Education in its sway over human

nature. There is a power for evil in Temptation, which no moral training has ever yet overcome. But if we were to suppose these two great powers rivals in the contest for mastery over the young man—the one always for good, the other always for evil, but the one often betrays her trust, the other never—such is the advantage which Temptation has over Education, in the moral state of our nature, as to insure invariably her success.

A mere glance at the proof of the inherent impurity of humanity, which is the barrier to the success of Education, is all that the limited discussion to which I am restricted will allow. And since God's Word is the rule by which the young man is to cleanse his way, that Word is sufficient authority for the existence of that impurity. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Such is the style of teaching in the Old Testament. Turn over to the New, and its corroboration is furnished by Christ, when He said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Here is the same impurity of nature with which, according to the Psalmist, we are born, and the nature of the change that must be effected in cleansing us from it. I imagine that all who take the pains to read these pages are sufficiently acquainted with their Bibles to know that such proofs as the foregoing might be multiplied almost indefinitely.

The impurity of our nature is not only established by the authority of the Word of God, but also by the facts in the history of the human race, and by the experience of every human being. In this state of the case, it is easy to see, as I have held, the advantage of Temptation over Education, and why, despite of all the efforts the latter may make, the former succeeds in sending the young man along the ways of impurity.

If the case were reversed, and our nature were pure, then Education might carry on the contest on equal grounds with Temptation. Then it might be admitted that from infancy forward through youth, and on to the end of the journey, our way might possibly never stand in need of cleansing. But the opposite being the fact, nature harmonizing with Temptation, "all have gone out of the way"—"there is none righteous; no, not one."

The young man's way, then, is corrupt. First, because of the depraved state of his nature. Secondly, because, in this condition

of his nature, Temptation to evil is more powerful than the best incentives to good which Education can urge. The latter may furnish theories which claim the approval of his mind; the former can offer indulgences which gratify the feelings of the heart. The restraints of the one are despised for the gratifications of the other.

But the argument by which I have maintained the corruption of the young man's way applies alike to all who, heeding not the counsel of the text, have failed to cleanse their way, according to God's Word. For the nature of all is depraved, and over this nature, unrenewed, Temptation holds despotic sway. I now proceed to remark, that to insure the corruption of the young man's way, there are temptations *peculiar* to youth, luring him into the ways of impurity.

Never were there two friends of closer intimacy than Temptation and Vice. They are business associates, and partners that never quarrel. They have more places of commerce than any other firm in the world, and offer more inducements to customers than all others put together. Especial pains are taken to please the fancy and suit the taste of the young. If once they have gained the custom of the old, habit makes them sure of their patronage. Of these partners, Temptation's office is to lure the victim to the place of trade, where Vice presides.

1. Pleasure may be set down as among the most successful agencies by which Temptation corrupts the young man's way. The love of it is strong in his nature, and its indulgence, under proper restraints, is allowable. But it is the policy of Temptation to take advantage of what may be right in itself, to lead astray the victim it has marked for crime. Note how through the young man's natural love of pleasure she lures him in the ways of vice.

Where is pleasure to be found? Temptation has as many answers as there are questioners. She suggests place after place of vice, which promises the gratification of every variety of taste. The elegantly decorated hall, where assemble the giddy throng of fashion's worshippers, she calls the temple of innocent amusement. Through his card of invitation, she exacts his promise for the evening. He joins in his first dance; or he is entertained, for the first time, with the comic or the tragic of the Theatre; and he feels, blinded by the one and gratified by the other, that Temptation did not promise more than Vice has fulfilled; and now, Temptation, if her delusive spell be not broken, leads him on from one place of innocent amusement,

falsely so called, to another, till you find him the companion of the worst in crime.

The appetite which he acquired for strong drink in the circles where he sought pleasure in amusement, now claims his unrestrained indulgence, and he is a drunkard. The excitement which he found in the game of chance for social pastime, has relieved gaming of the enormity with which he had been accustomed to invest it, and he is a gambler. Continuing his negotiations with Temptation, thus on he goes, till he becomes, not only the inmate of all the haunts of Vice, but the accomplice in, and perpetrator of, all its deeds; as corrupt in his way as any convict who has ever paid the penalty of his crimes in a penitentiary or upon a gallows.

2. Vanity is another of the successful agencies through which Temptation corrupts the young man's way.

Unless he is a youth of understanding beyond his years, vanity is excited often by the interest he sees felt for him, while he is preparing for the part he is to perform in the drama of life. Here lies the danger, in the case of the young man whose native talent gives early promise of usefulness and distinction in the world. He is made conscious of superior capacity by his teacher at school, or by his parents at home. This consciousness is renewed from time to time, and in various ways, by his contact with society. Temptation, seeking to entrap and ruin him, kindles out of it the vanity which consumes all his splendid promise; and so far from meeting expectation, he is flattered into a self-assumed consequence which makes him an object of disgust to the society over which he is ambitious to obtain sway.

But vanity, like pleasure, has many tracks, over which by the aid of Temptation she guides the erring footsteps of the young man. One makes his boast of family—another of position—another of appearance. Vanity in all its forms, by the help of Temptation, has a miserable end for its victim.

3. Honor, higher in grade than pleasure or vanity, is another agent by which Temptation corrupts the young man's way.

His honor is more than his life—is more than the life of his fellow. To him it is the "higher law"—in a more criminal sense than any "higher law" known to politics—higher than his *country's* law, higher than *God's* law. Obeying the behest of this law, how terrible are the deeds written in humanity's history!

The young man of accomplished education and well-furnished mind, who cannot stoop so low as to reach down to a mean action, is well deserving the admiration of all. But just here the nobleness of his character, and the estimate in which he is held on this account, is the point at which Temptation directs her battery. As he would not do a mean action, she would compromise his honor if he did not resent insult. Sadly misguided, he gives or accepts the challenge to mortal combat, in which, at the crack of the rifle, is extinguished a light which, had it gained its zenith, might have shone in the galaxy of great men, with a lustre scarce inferior to that of Calhoun, or Clay, or Webster. Hamilton and Decatur both fell by the bloody hands of duellist murderers while yet comparatively young men.

It is impossible to estimate the power which, through these and *other agencies*, Temptation sways over the young man. Appeal is made to every impulse of his ardent nature, and with such success that in many sad instances the youth of even pious education and early virtue has become desperate in vice, reckless of the laws of God and man, a fit subject for the penalty of both.

But the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" as it implies the fact that his way is corrupt, applies also to the young man whom neither pleasure, vanity, nor honor, has led astray, and who may have avoided the temptations most common and most fatal to the morality of youth. He may never have polluted his lips with profanity. He may never have inflamed his spirit with wine. He may never have kindled the fire of passion with the fuel of impure or revengeful thoughts. Yet since, as we have seen, his nature is corrupt, that nature develops only by corrupt ways of thought, or feeling, or action. For him, as well as the young man of riot and crime, the question is submitted, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?"

II. The second part of the text shall now claim attention, namely, the Answer to the Question—"By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."

Here is a general and specific direction.

1. "By taking heed thereto." To heed is to think. That thinking which implies earnest inquiry into what is right or wrong, and which awakens desire of the one, with the purpose to pursue it—apprehension of the other, with the purpose to avoid it.

Inconsideration is one of the greatest faults of youth. It is the door by which Temptation is admitted, in gaining the ear of youthful desire for sinful indulgence. In his haste, the young man does not stop to think.

How much would be different in every man's life, if he had only thought before he spoke, and reflected before he acted! And could youth know without experience the consequences of heedlessness—consequences which embitter maturity and age—the indiscretions and crimes which so often mar and stain this period in life's journey would be avoided. But, alas! the experience which teaches the father the follies of his youth conveys not its lessons to his son.

There is a vast difference between the seeming and the real of things. The former beguiles; the latter punishes. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Experience teaches the old man to distrust the seeming, and to fear the real. Had he taken heed, he might have detected what was only seeming, and avoided the real, with which he is punished, in painful remembrance of the sins of his youth. Too late he learns from the pangs of sorrow and remorse—lessons taught in the school of experience—to distrust the seeming of things. The old man, remembering, can but exclaim, Oh, that the young man would think!

Heeding, the young man would at once realize a consciousness of his evil way—the evil of his nature inherited, and the evil of his practice commenced in his very first step after crossing the line of accountability. But however much he might take heed to his way by thought and investigation of the principles of right and wrong, and by action corresponding in as full a measure as possible to his convictions and conclusions, how earnestly soever he might endeavor to pursue the right and avoid the wrong, as the means of cleansing and keeping pure his way, he must fail utterly, if he overlook the second part of the answer to the question. And now we come to the specific direction contained in the text.

2. "According to Thy Word."

This is the standard that must rule his thinking and acting, if indeed he would cleanse his way. God's Word is the only guide to the path of purity—the true rule of faith and practice.

First of all, then, acquaintance with God's Word is of the highest moment, and young men cannot be too thoroughly impressed with

the importance of its study. Wisdom unto salvation is the lesson it teaches. I am in want of terms strong enough to express the commendation due to Education, through the agencies she employs to impart to the youthful mind a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Not that Education, through the instruction she furnishes by her best agencies, including the Sabbath-school and Christian associations of young men, and even the preaching of the Gospel, can cleanse a man's way, but the instruction she thus imparts is the very best preparation of the soul for the action of the only cleansing power. She is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

A servant must know his master's will before understandingly he can do it; and as knowledge is not intuitive, but acquired, he must gain it by instruction or study; and the more direct the source of his information, the clearer will be his conviction of duty, and the more confident will he be of approbation in its performance. I do not, however, say that knowledge of God's Word is absolutely dependent upon direct access to its pages. This would be to say that a large part of our Roman Catholic and slave population are shut up in total ignorance—the former not being permitted to read it, except within such limits as proscribe it to the masses; the latter, making but few exceptions, not being able to read it. No one doubts the statement in regard to the latter. If that in reference to the former be denied by the Catholic, or questioned by the Protestant, I refer for its proof, in the first place, to the action of the Council of Trent. In the second place, to the fact, that everywhere throughout our country, where Roman Catholic influence is felt, there is outspoken opposition to the Bible in the public schools. And thirdly, to the very significant fact that it is excluded from the Sabbath schools of said church, and from all the schools of literature under its patronage.

As the means of instruction to our youth, that our young men may take it as the guide of their way, let the Bible, God's blessed Word, go into all the schools, public and private, in the land; let it go into every family, that its morning and evening lessons may form a part of the devotions of the domestic altar; let it thus lodge its purifying truths in the hearts of our children, "that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

"What would be the condition of any one of us," said Daniel Webster on his dying bed, "without the hope of immortality, and what is there to rest that hope upon but the Gospel?" Take the Gospel of Jesus away from us—deny us all access to the Word of God—and the light that cheered the soul of the great statesman on the eve of its exit to eternity would be extinguished, and a darkness more dense than covered Egypt, when plagued by the judgments of Heaven, would veil the face of the moral firmament now lit up with the glorious sun of Gospel truth. Whatever else may be learned from other sources—and science, philosophy, and history, are almost exhaustless fountains—the Bible alone can furnish the certain knowledge of immortality, and point the way to its untold joys. It alone contains the lesson of wisdom unto salvation, teaching, as it does, the process of cleansing by which the young man's way is made pure.

"According to Thy Word."

Two questions naturally arise. What does God's Word teach? What does it require in cleansing the young man's way?

1. What does it teach?

The primary is the most important lesson in every branch of knowledge. A teacher would never make a scholar of his pupil, if he did not begin with the alphabet. First principles are interwoven through every part of subsequent attainment. The great problem for the study of the young man, who would cleanse his way, is *himself;* the first lesson in its solution is the impurity of his moral state. Himself the subject, his sinful nature the alphabet, God's Word the teacher. "Know thyself" was the wisest maxim of the old philosophers; but the teacher was wanting to explain the alphabet, and instruct them in the first principles of self-knowledge; they had not God's Word.

I will add nothing to the proof of the depraved moral state of humanity submitted, in maintaining the corruption of the young man's way. Starting with this primary principle, to the truth of which his consciousness responds, resist it as he may, he realizes the fact that his way is impure, and needs cleansing—in short, that he is a sinner, guilty before God, and deserving hell.

The second lesson which God's Word teaches, is, that though a sinner, he has a Saviour, great and glorious, even Jesus, who, to save him, invested Divinity in flesh; and in that flesh, in due time, when we were without strength, died for the ungodly—a Saviour

who, by the shedding of His blood, opened the fountain for the cleansing of his depraved nature, and who by His precepts marked out for him the way of purity, and by His example showed him how to walk in it.

Such are the preparatory lessons the young man must learn, if he would cleanse his way, according to God's Word. First, that he is a sinner; secondly, that he has a Saviour. They are not merely lessons for his mental, but his moral nature—not only to be assented to as facts furnished by the revelation of Divine truth, but as facts that are to penetrate the soul with conviction and hope.

2. And now, finally, what does God's Word require?

Plainly, that he at once turn from the way of impurity, by "repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and faith succeed the conviction that he is a sinner, and the knowledge of the fact that he has a Saviour. Repentance is the heart's sorrow that he is a sinner; faith is the heart's trust in the Redeemer. But repentance cannot cleanse his way. Faith cannot do it. These are but means to which he must resort in having it done, and it cannot be done without them. He must be converted—by which I mean there must be effected such a change in his nature as shall prepare him for the succeeding steps of obedience, in the way of purity. Repentance succeeds conviction; faith succeeds repentance; conversion succeeds faith. The converting power of the Holy Ghost reaches the heart, and renews the nature, only through faith in Christ. God's Word requires, in cleansing the young man's way, his repentance, faith, conversion—not one or the other, but all. There is no other process for those who, having God's Word, are made conscious that they are sinners, and know that they have a Saviour; and of those who have not God's Word, this is not the place to speak. Repentance is the preparation for faith; faith is the preparation for conversion. And nothing can be more clear, if we have not exaggerated the depraved condition of humanity, than that, in order to moral purity, there must be the action upon the heart of the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit.

There are many powerful motives which enforce the counsel of the text, a due reflection upon which would make the young man wise unto salvation. I select only two, on which, in conclusion, I make my appeal to him in favor of the period of youth as the most propitious for cleansing his way—namely, *habit* and *happiness*.

Try it when he may, it will be found no easy work; but it is easier now than it will be if delayed to maturity or age. He may master habit now, but presently habit will master him. No doubt of it, at all. It is to prove the great auxiliary to him in the way he goes, whether it be virtue or vice, purity or impurity. Youth is the period when habit is planted in our nature. It grows, cultured by thought, feeling, and action, till it becomes the tree that casts its shade, refreshing or deadly, over the whole area of character.

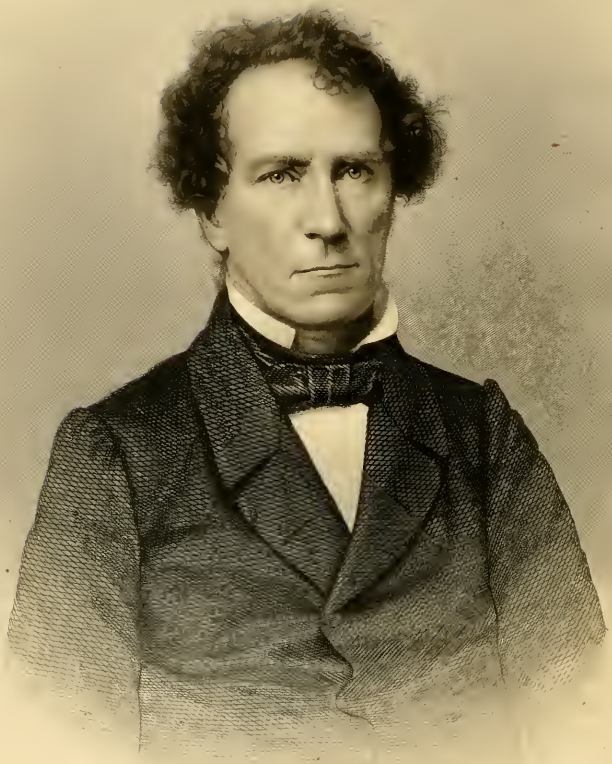
The formation of habits of piety in youth has an importance which age only can fully appreciate. If the young man would know the advantage of habits of early piety, let him go and talk with the man—and it is only here and there he will find one—who, in his riper years or advanced age, has become religious. The daily struggles he has with bad habits teach him, too late, how much he would have gained in surmounting the difficulties in the way of a pious life, had he in youth "cleansed his way" according to God's Word.

But I rest not my appeal to the young man alone on the argument from the force of *habit*, which I have barely touched. Besides the help he may gain hereafter, in treading the way of purity, from the habit of piety formed while young, I urge the *happiness* which piety begun in youth will furnish all along life's pilgrimage, and at its end.

Happiness is the good after which our restless nature pants. Everywhere and always, and in all things, it is the object we pursue. There is, after all, but one road to it. That is the way cleansed according to God's Word, and known by the name of purity. This is the path of the just, that shineth more and more to the perfect day. In this way, we cannot go without Happiness for a companion. Here we find duty; we perform it, and are happy. Here we find privilege; we improve it, and are happy. Here we find opportunities of usefulness; and we do good, and are happy. Let the young man know, his ardent nature panting after happiness, that in the way of purity he will always find duty, privilege, and usefulness, the springs from which he may quench his thirst. In short, purity is the essential of happiness; and more, purity is always happy.

And then the end; as he shall look back over the way he has come, then, when those who have gone by the way of impurity shall be most unhappy, he will be most happy. The memories of the past will be as the dew of youth upon his old age, and at four-score the

future will furnish him a more glorious prospect than he looked upon from the Mount of Anticipation at twenty. If the young man would make his old age happy, his end triumphant, and his future glorious, he has only to hearken to the counsel of the text, "By taking heed to his way, and cleansing it according to God's Word."



THE NEW COMMANDMENT.

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A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.—*John*, xiii, 34.

Scientific theology has its important uses, but it must not be confounded with religion. Nobody would discard mathematics; it would, however, be intolerable mockery if, instead of a warm, faithful portrait of one dear to us, the artist should furnish only a cold arithmetical enumeration of the sizes and proportions of his features. Indeed, though dry scholastic divinity may sometimes serve to expose error and heresy, it may be dangerous to true devotion; it is almost sure to kill the life out of piety, just as the knife destroys the strength and vigor of a healthy body, however indispensable surgery may be to explore the seats of disease, to remove tumors, and amputate limbs.

The more you study the Gospel, the more will you feel that it appeals to the affections. The Saviour and his apostles constantly address the heart. One reason, indeed, why "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," is, that religion may be a living, cordial, genial thing—gratitude and attachment to a person; and the sacred books always make love at once the motive and essence of all piety. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Our text is a remarkable illustration of this truth. Jesus is about to leave the earth. Upon that earth, his church is to wage a war which shall certainly triumph. And, now, what are his parting instructions to his church? How are his followers to vanquish all the banded opposition of the world? Does he counsel them to amass wealth? to secure high offices? to acquire learning? to equip fleets and armies? to employ craft and intrigue? No; the first disciples were so poor that they could say, "Silver and gold have we none;"

they were destitute of learning; they were humble and despised; nor did they ever kill or wound a single human being, though constantly wronged, insulted, murdered. The power with which the Redeemer arms his church—but which that church still so little comprehends—is the power of love. All wealth and honor and might were his, and he could have conferred them upon his subjects; but he bequeaths to them a richer legacy, a more resistless potency. He infuses love into their souls. "Love one another," he says. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." This is the sacrament by which a new era is inaugurated in the history of the world; this is the sign by which the cause of Jesus shall triumph, and his empire be established.

"That ye love one another." Let us meditate upon this great truth, and then inquire why this commandment is called "new." "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." O Jesus, uncreated, eternal, essential Love! incarnate, bleeding, dying Love! risen, ascended, glorified Love! let thy voice be heard this day in our hearts, repeating this new commandment; let thy Spirit kindle this love in our souls, to dwell there and burn there with sacred, inextinguishable ardors.

I. This valedictory address of the Redeemer, these farewell instructions to his disciples, are full of significancy, and deserve our most careful study. What oceans of ink, what rivers of blood, have been shed about the True Church. Now, surely, if salvation depends on our being within the pale of some hallowed enclosure, on the observance of certain forms and rites, Jesus would, in these final injunctions, have accurately defined this consecrated area; he would have described this indispensable machinery. But we hear from his lips not a syllable on these subjects. He has taught us all things pertaining to eternal life, and he has given us a programme of the last judgment; but neither in his discourses, nor in his admonitions as to the great Assizes, nor in the inspired teachings of his apostles, do we find one word about the mystical virtues of churches and sacraments. I do not undervalue creeds and forms and ordinances, but, after all, love is the soul of all creeds, the heart of all forms, the life of all ordinances. Without love, all sacraments and rites and ministries are "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals." Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, and with love breathed into their souls, there Christ is in the midst of them, there is a true church.

My brethren, love is the only badge by which the church of Christ is known. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Nations have their escutcheons, their crests, and ensigns; armies have their shields and banners; and families their heraldry, with its arms and quarters and bearings. In the days of Christ, Jews and Gentiles had their emblems, different sects and schools and academies being distinguished by symbols, devices, and mottoes. At this day, churches called Christian glory in names and titles, in pomp and parade. But there is only one badge of the true church which will be recognised and honored by "all men." That badge is love. "The banner over us is love." A society may have a ministry and ordinances, may build temples, and observe the Sabbath, and do many virtuous acts; but, without love, it is not a church of which Christ is the head, and its members his members. "He that loveth is born of God." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Love is the only law by which a church of Christ is to be governed. Church government—how much pride, prejudice, ambition, selfishness, arrogance, injustice, cruelty—the very tempers most emphatically reprobated by the Gospel—have been sanctified by this phrase, staining the history of the church, so miscalled, with the darkest and foulest crimes which have blackened the annals of our race. A king, dabbling with astronomy, once said, "Had I been present when God arranged the solar system, I could have made some important suggestions." So vain men have thought as to the Saviour's regulation of his church, and they have sought to improve his system. But he knew what was in man. Under his own eye, and on more than one occasion, his apostles betrayed spiritual ambition, inquiring, "Who should be greatest?" and you remember his answer. Had he indoctrinated them in the arts of exercising dominion—of elevating themselves into an ecclesiastical aristocracy—they would have been apt scholars. All men are geniuses in that department of learning which teaches self-aggrandizement. But he rebukes their ambition, setting a little child before them, and pronouncing him greatest who has the most childlike and loving spirit: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be

your servant." As in the natural world, the Creator secures order without monotony, by forming each particle of matter with its own peculiar properties, and throwing around all substances the law of gravitation, so in the church there are many members and diversities of gifts and tastes and characters, but the law of love binds all into one harmonious whole.

I know it would be unutterable folly to dispense with the vigorous and rigorous administration of laws in such a world as this; human society would soon be disorganized and plunged in wild anarchy and confusion, were its members left to be controlled by love. If any events could unite men together as brothers, they were the trials and triumphs of the American Revolution. Yet scarcely had independence been achieved, when an enemy more formidable than any foreign army at once appeared, and intestine strife threatened to rend into hostile fragments that noble Confederation. It was at this critical moment that General Washington made a remark, showing his calm and profound wisdom. Mr. Lee wrote, urging him to use his great influence to quell a tumult in Massachusetts. "You talk of influence"—this is the reply—"but influence is not government, and nothing can save the country but a government. For this, we have no common Constitution."

"*Influence is not government;*" but in the church, influence is the best government—the influence of love. While Jesus was upon earth, what regulated his young church? It was his influence. Incarnate love was the incarnate conscience of his church. And now, love is the only arbiter needed; love will settle everything. If love reign in a church, it will almost supersede discipline.

When, from the internal administration of the church, we turn to its outward work, its enterprise upon the earth, we find a mission entirely of love. It is this which makes the Gospel the religion suited to all climes and all ages. It is the code of love; it deals not with cases, but with principles; it appeals not to casuistry, but to the heart. Human enactments, executed by human tribunals, really have in them no moral sanction whatever; they appeal never to conscience, but only to detected facts; they leave the depraved passions to grow and fester, and scowl and pounce only upon their outbreaks. The Gospel reaches the springs and sources of character, and seeks to purify them; it nourishes principles of love, and these will destroy selfishness, and thus secure universal and eternal equity in all things.

"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness." Which of the brothers was wrong, he does not decide; but he exhibits the principle which settles this and all similar cases. The baneful love of money was the cause of that family quarrel, as it is of almost all family quarrels now. Let this vice be corrected, and the disgrace and unhappiness will at once cease. And it is thus the Gospel redresses all the evils and disorders of society. It assails no form of civil government, prescribing a better; but it enforces principles which will transform any government into a government of love. It does not seek to break up social and domestic relations, but it infuses a spirit which will make these relations ties of affection and happiness.

I will only add one other remark here. It is love, my brethren, which is to secure the perpetuity, and final and universal triumph, of the church of Christ. Force, stratagem, hereditary prescriptive authority—these are the foundations on which earthly kingdoms rest. Had Jesus been a competitor with worldly monarchs—had he accepted the crown offered him, and employed his miraculous power to establish a temporal empire, his throne, like that of the Cæsars, would have been an unsubstantial, perishable fabric. But he founded his empire on love; and as God alone is omnipotent, because he only is pure, essential Love, so it is certain that "the gates of hell can never prevail" against a church which embodies the love of God. Against it error and superstition and tyranny will set themselves, and for a time its progress may be arrested; it may even seem to be defeated; but it will possess the earth, "as the waters cover the face of the deep." You stand upon the sea-shore when the tide is in its flood. Wave after wave rolls up, is broken, and driven back; but the ocean is thundering in, and will sweep all before it.

Crowded as was the life of Napoleon with the manifestations of genius, nothing ever done or uttered by him discloses more strikingly the greatness of his mind than those profound words recorded by Count Montholon: "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus is not a man. The religion of Christ is a mystery which subsists by its own force, and proceeds from a mind which is not a human mind. We find in it a marked individuality, which originated a train of words and actions unknown before. Jesus borrowed nothing from

our knowledge. He was not a philosopher, for his proofs were miracles, and from the first his followers worshipped him. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself, founded empires; but upon what foundation did we rear the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded an empire upon love; and, at this hour, multitudes of men would die for him. I die before my time, and my body will be given back to the earth, to become food for worms. Such is the fate of him who has been called the Great Napoleon! What an abyss between my end and the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is proclaimed, and loved, and adored, which is extending over the whole earth."

It is a significant fact, that Jesus left behind him no prescribed artificial organization; yet his teachings established a society compacted by ties firmer, more indissoluble, than those which consolidate states and kingdoms. Unlike earthly kings, he did not concern himself about a successor; nor, like human teachers and philosophers, did he compose volumes containing a full and systematic exhibition of his doctrines. He simply taught men to love. This was the lesson our common humanity was waiting to receive, and it at once penetrated to the depths of our nature. Uttered by an humble Hebrew youth, that imperial word, "Love," began directly and irresistibly to work out the most wonderful changes. Pride, prejudice, lodged and rooted superstitions, were soon vanquished by it. Thrones have crumbled and dynasties have expired, but the power of that word hath not been exhausted; it is inexhaustible; it will yet subdue and renovate this fallen world, making all things new, creating a new earth, and a new heaven bending over it.

There are other thoughts which I ought to present here, but I must sacrifice them. I ought to remind you that love is the glory, the happiness, the perfection, of the church of Christ. Love is greater than faith and hope, not only because it is more enduring, but because it comprehends them both; for it "*hopeth* all things, *believeth* all things." It hath more hope than hope itself, more faith than faith itself. We every day see loving hearts hoping against hope, and trusting in spite of the basest perfidiousness. Love indeed is the crowning flower in which all the Christian graces shall expand and bloom in eternity. It is the glory, the happiness, the perfection, of the church triumphant. The highest heaven knows nothing more exalted and blessed than love. It is folly to speak of knowledge.

We mistake familiarity for knowledge, or we would confess our ignorance of everything. We think, and understand, and speak, as children; and when "that which is perfect is come," these puerilities shall all "*be done away*"—that is, what we call knowledge will not be perfected, but entirely superseded, as so much imbecility and nescience. But love will be perfected in heaven. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." But "Love never faileth." The perfection of love is the beatific glory of heaven; and to be "made perfect in love" is to anticipate heaven while we are upon earth.

While, however, I must omit many thoughts upon which I would delight to dwell—for this is a subject very dear to me—there is one question which I must put before leaving this topic. I must ask each of you, Do you belong to the true church of Christ? Have you this love for his people? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" "He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." Ponder these solemn, searching, stripping words. Do not speak of your love for God. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." You love God; you are zealous and liberal; you delight in prayer, in the bible, the sanctuary, and all the exercises of devotion. Very well. But do you love your brother? do you bear with his infirmities? do you admire his excellences? is his reputation dear to you? are you concerned for his salvation?—"But he has so many imperfections and faults." What, are you faultless, then? do you not love yourself, in spite of conscious imperfection? do you not expect Jesus to love you and bear with you, though loaded with defects? What if God should condemn you, as you well know you are compelled constantly to condemn yourself!

Lord, many a time, I am a-weary quite
  Of my own self, my sin, my vanity;
Yet be not Thou—or I am lost outright—
    Weary of me.

And hate against myself I often bear,
  And enter with myself in fierce debate.
Take Thou no part against myself, nor share
    In that just hate.

Best friends might loathe us, if what things perverse
We know of our own selves, they also knew.
Lord, Holy One, if Thou, who knowest worse,
Should'st loathe us too.

This humbling confession of the poet, is it not yours? And, after this, will you be eagle-sighted to detect blemishes in your brother—motes in your brother's eye—and plead his imperfections as a reason for not loving him? Ah, my dear hearer, how little have you been in the school of Christ; what a stranger are you to that love which he taught, and which his whole life exemplified.

II. "That ye love one another." I have thus spoken of this parting injunction of the Redeemer. Of this heavenly grace we know, alas! little but the name. The models of greatness which we dream of in youth, and which we admire in mature age, are they not men of the world, leaders in the world, who utterly despise this precept? And even in the church, our eulogiums of this love are, I had almost said, epitaphs upon a dead virtue. If a man complies with some natural impulses of humanity, if he expends some small sums in alms, he is regarded as a charitable man, though he indulges in calumny, vindictiveness, every form of selfishness. But without love, nothing is charity. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." If a man contributes to build churches, and is zealous about ceremonies and rites and dogmas, he is a model of devotion, though he be ever so intolerant and bigoted. But without love, nothing is devotion. "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." In our remaining article, I am going to examine what there is of novelty in this injunction. For Jesus designates this precept as a new enactment. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another."

Now, at first, this seems strange; for to love others was an old commandment; it pervades the Old Testament, and Jesus himself gives it as an epitome of the second table of the decalogue. How, then, can it be called new? This is a question which has excited much discussion; in fact, however, John, who records the text, has furnished its explanation. In his First Epistle he says: "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning; again a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; *because the*

darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." And he then enforces the new command of love to our brother. To love, then, is an old commandment; but now, since Christ has come to save us, it is new, because a light is thrown upon this duty which presents it in aspects and with motives never known before.

This is the general exposition given by the Holy Spirit. And if you require me to go into detail, and to specify in what respects this precept is new, the answer is easy. For it is manifest, in the first place, that, under the Gospel, this commandment appeals to a new principle. The affection here required is not what the world calls friendship, for it is to be recognised by "all men" as the distinctive trait of a disciple. It is an affection springing from faith; hence, "Add to your faith—brotherly kindness." It is, in fact, a reverberation of our love to God.

I will explain myself; and, for this purpose, let me ask you to consider carefully the language of the apostle: "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Does not this reasoning seem to you very illogical? Is it easier, then, to love a man, with all his defects before me, than to love the blessed God? The solution of this difficulty is found in the nature of the love inculcated. It is not attachment to a human being for his natural excellences, but complacency in the image of God reflected by him. If this likeness, thus brought near and vividly in contact with our senses, has no charm for us, how can we pretend to love God, whose character we can only dimly apprehend by faith? "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Now, Jesus has made a new revelation of the Father. When we say that God is a king, we speak metaphorically; but his fatherhood is not a figure. That we are not the inhabitants of a forlorn, forsaken, fatherless world—that God sustains to us relations infinitely more tender and enduring than those between us and the parents from whom have sprung only our bodies—this is a glorious, strengthening, rejoicing truth. It is, however, a truth which patriarch and prophet never reached. Among the proofs of depravity which everywhere met his eye, none seems to have affected the Saviour more than this ignorance. He saw the world living as if the fatherhood of God were a falsehood. Hence that melancholy exclamation, "O righteous Father! the world hath not known thee;" and hence his constant anxiety to elevate the minds and hearts of

his disciples to this great truth. Jesus revealed the Father; and what a revelation! "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such a manifestation not only sheds amazing glory on our race, but binds us together by the dearest brotherhood. The old commandment was written on stone; but it becomes new, because it is now engraved upon the heart by rays which come directly from the love of God as it shines in the face of Jesus.

This first remark suggests a second. If this love to our brethren be an emanation and reflection of our love to God, it will, of course, embrace all who are the children of God; and the commandment is therefore new, not only in its principle, but in its extent.

It is a fearful observation of Hezel, but too true, that "To nothing is man more inclined than to the hatred of man." What an appalling lesson in those words of the apostle, "This is the message which ye had from the beginning, that ye should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." That is to say, the want of love is secret hatred, and this hatred only waits for provocation to commit murder. Indeed, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." Even in the Old Testament, love was limited, partial, selfish. There, it is "*My God.*" Jesus first taught us to say "*Our Father,*" thus abolishing all exclusiveness, and establishing a new and heavenly union among all the children of God.

My brethren, this is a sublime truth. I know not how it affects you, but the more I revolve it, the more intensely am I conscious that Jesus was more than man. Consider who he was, if he possessed not the divinity he claimed; he was, then, only a poor, obscure, unlearned youth, and that youth a Hebrew. How impossible for him not to imbibe the prejudices of his nation, which caused them to shrink from all contact with other people as defiling. When I recollect the age in which Jesus appeared, and the nation from which he sprang, and then hear him revealing this doctrine—a doctrine which, even at this day, after eighteen hundred years, is still new and unintelligible to most Christians—I confess I feel a conviction, which I cannot express, of his immeasurable elevation above humanity. And I feel, too, that the bonds in which the Gospel unites his followers are new bonds, comprehending all in one new body; that in him there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female," there is neither rich nor poor, honored nor obscure, alien nor kindred, stranger nor friend; but "all are one in Christ Jesus." All other ties and relations are subordinated to this *re-ligion*—this new spiritual affinity, which *re-binds* us to Christ and to each other.

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Separated from God, men are walled off from each other by selfish and hostile distinctions. To repair these unnatural breaches, the "Son of God" became "Son of Man"—not of any particular man, but of humanity. He thus put himself in communication with our common nature, that he might attract us all to God, and unite us all to one another by new and heavenly ties. Those who have learned of Jesus will rejoice in the spiritual equality of all who are in him. As applied to any of them, the term "lower orders," too often heard in the church and pulpit, is a direct insult to the Redeemer. When, where, did the carpenter's son ever use or teach such an epithet?

And this brings us to a third novelty in this command of the Saviour. I mean its spirituality. The love mentioned in our text is affection, not only for the bodies, but for the souls of our brethren.

If it be a grand truth that Jesus came to reveal the Father to man, it is another grand truth, that he came to reveal man to himself. You all know the effect of familiarity in dulling our sensibilities, so that the orb of day, in his noontide glory, attracts less attention than the blaze of a meteor or the glare of a rocket. But for this deadening influence of familiarity, we would at once be struck with the startling originality of Christ's teachings as to the soul of man. That our nature is spiritual, I believe, indeed, to be one of the radical truths received from God at the creation; but humanity had lost it; scarcely a dim echo of it had been transmitted.

Like the royal child of whom we read, man had degenerated from the pristine consciousness of his dignity. Why, even now, and in lands called Christian—nay, in churches called Christian—how few really and practically recognise the soul. Jesus proclaimed this truth—a truth which our nature longed to hear. In his teachings, the soul is everything. Little cared he for what was external. He heeded neither the trappings of the prince nor the rags of the beggar. Beneath all, through all, he saw a soul whose dignity and worth transcend finite thought; and with what solemn warnings, with what intense earnestness, with what weeping entreaties and expostulations,

did he not seek to awaken in man a sense of the existence and glory and danger of that immortal spirit. This was the source of the bitter tears he shed—not poverty, nor sickness, nor sorrow, nor the death of man's body—but the soul, which was everywhere overlooked and wronged, and about to perish forever.

This caused him to cling to every human being with an interest which no guilt could destroy, a compassion which no injuries nor insults could exhaust. The only charge which his enemies could ever prove against him was conveyed in that sneer, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And, catching his spirit, breathing an atmosphere yet warm, vibrating with the benedictions of their ascended Lord, see what a new passion inflames the souls of his disciples. Observe, first, their love among themselves. Selfishness is expelled by a new and absorbing devotion to each other. They are initiated into a new brotherhood which astonishes the men of the world, who—unable to comprehend this mystery—exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another." Nor did they only identify themselves with each other. The spirit which Jesus bequeathed to them could not find adequate vent in the church; it overleaped all restraints, and inaugurated an enterprise which was, and still is, the most glorious spectacle to angels. Men traversing the earth, and enduring toil and suffering, not for gain, but for love to their enemies; men renouncing home, wealth, ease, honor, and welcoming poverty, reproach, shipwreck, dungeons, cruel deaths, not to win honor or fame, but to save the souls of others—here was a phenomenon—here was a wonderful epoch in the archives of our race. This new revelation of the transcendent glory of the soul, flooded the hearts of that little band of apostles, and sent them through the world, burning with a zeal and love which were indefatigable and inextinguishable.

A fourth novelty in the Saviour's command is its comprehensiveness; for it embraces and renders superfluous all other commands. A testator, about to die, executes a new will, which, while it ratifies, supersedes all former wills.

Manifold are the duties which the word and spirit of Christ require us to perform towards each other, but "Love is the fulfilling of the whole law." The life, health, property, purity, reputation, happiness, salvation of a brother—these should be sacred to us. To injure a Christian in either of these respects is such a sin, that Jesus

declares, "It were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he drowned in the depth of the sea," than to wrong the humblest of his people. But if love reign in our hearts, no enactments will be needed as to these obligations; our conduct will be regulated by a higher and holier motive than the dread of penalty. Every former commandment is merged in this commandment, every duty is comprised in this duty.

It is, however, above all, in the type and example and measure of love prescribed, that this precept is unique and singular; for we are to love each other as Christ hath loved us. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

I wish you, my friends, to feel this closing remark. And to impress it upon your hearts, let me remind you that, in speaking of a new commandment, Jesus plainly refers to the moral code published on Sinai. This was sealed and ratified with blood. "Neither was the first testament dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and with scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you." Now, when the Saviour uttered the commandment in our text, he was seated at the table upon which the supper had just been received; he had just instituted that solemn and touching ordinance, saying, "This is my body which is broken for you, this is my blood which is shed for you"—thus dedicating this new testament with his own blood. And, thus consecrated and enforced, well may this commandment be called new. "As I have loved you"—this is his own interpretation of the newness of this command; but who can comprehend all the import of these words? How many admonitions, and reproofs, and exhortations, are condensed into that single sentence.

A love how attentive—as considerate and assiduous as the tenderness of a woman. Are others hungry? he works miracles to feed them, but will not employ his power for himself, even when famishing in the wilderness. Are his disciples weary? he bids them "Come apart and rest awhile," but gives no repose to his exhausted frame Even in his agony, he is concerned to provide a home and tender sympathy for John, whose heart would be most bitterly wrung

by his bereavement, as well as for his mother. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" And we are to love as he loved, with the same considerate assiduous solicitude.

A love how confiding. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Often had they been faithless; and now, while addressing them, he knows that they will all in a few hours forsake him. Yet he trusts them; he opens his whole heart to them; he commits his cause to their keeping. And we must love as he loved. Nothing so alienates human hearts as suspicion; nothing cements others to us more strongly, and more certainly secures fidelity and devotion, than confidence.

A love so condescending, that it stoops to the most menial office of kindness and hospitality. It was just before uttering the text, that he performed an act which I can never recall without tears, when I remember his consciousness of ineffable majesty. "And Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper and laid aside his garment, and took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." And we are to love as he loved. "Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

Love so compassionate, that he not only pronounces every sin, however aggravated, pardonable, if only against himself; but he is ingenious in finding apologies for all the weaknesses, even for the baseness and treachery, of those he had trusted. Could anything be more unfeeling than the want of sympathy in his three chosen friends in the garden? They could not, for one hour, watch with him in his sore anguish. But he pities them, and excuses them, saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Was ever such vileness as that of Thomas, who stubbornly rejects all proofs, and dictates the most unreasonable, not to say impious, conditions? But Jesus not only forgives him, he complies with the demands of this perverse disciple. All forsook him, and Peter denied him. Does he resent this perfidiousness? Scarcely has he

risen, before he sends a special message of love to Peter, "Go tell my disciples *and Peter;*" and he appears to the apostles without a word of reproof, with assurances of a devotion which no ingratitude, no turpitude, could alter.

Love so disinterested, that he entirely forgets himself when his friends are in sorrow or danger. The fearful hour of his crucifixion is at hand, but he is solely occupied in encouraging and comforting those whom he is about to leave as orphans in the world. The armed band approach in the night, he at once throws himself between them and the apostles, hastening to immolate himself that he may cover his disciples. "If ye seek me," he says, "let these go their way." And when toiling up the hill, bearing his cross, he is unwilling that the women should be afflicted for him. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

But I will never have done upon this subject. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Having devoted his whole life to his disciples, so that he could appeal to them, "if they had lacked anything," he now welcomes death, and pours out his blood for them. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." On the cross he bears our burden, that we might learn to "bear one another's burden." Risen, he remains forty days upon earth, teaching us that no prospect of happiness should cause us to forget our brethren. Ascending, his eyes turn not to the radiant gates which are lifted up to usher him into glory; they are bent upon objects dearer to his heart—upon his little flock, whom he "is blessing" as he rises from the earth, and continues blessing until "a cloud" of angels "receives him out of their sight." Nor has his love known, nor will it ever know, any abatement. "The Forerunner is *for us* entered" into heaven. In the midst of the throne he still loves to wear our humanity; he is still "a merciful High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities." No elevation can weaken his sympathy for the humblest Christian. Surrounded by glorified worshippers, his delight is still in his church upon earth. The salvation of sinners was "the joy set before him" in the days of his suffering pilgrimage here; and it is when beholding the peace and happiness and safety of his people, that he "sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied." "A

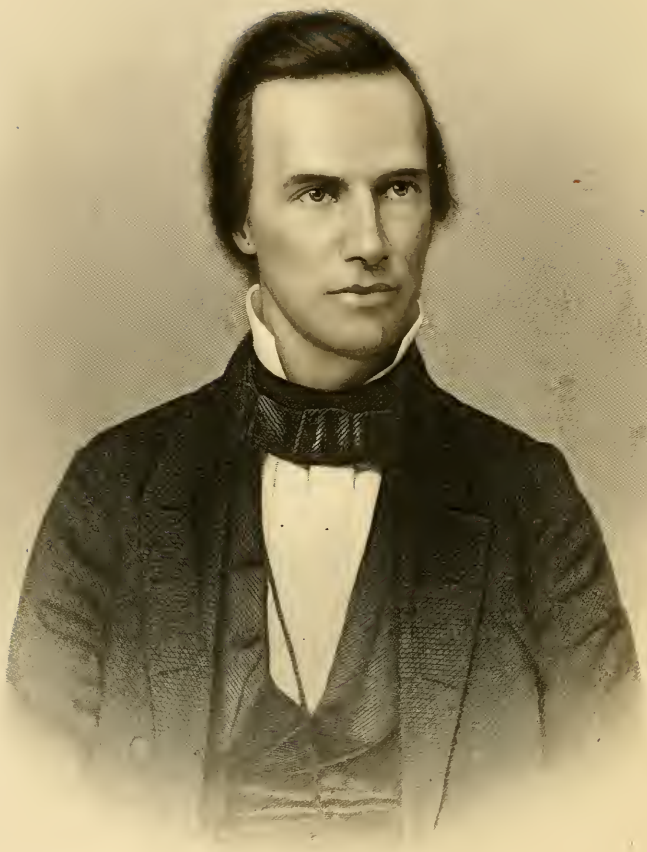
friend of publicans and sinners!" this was the contemptuous derision flung against him by the superb Pharisees. He does not repel the impeachment; he glories in it. He prefers that title above all his titles. All over this guilty earth he would have it proclaimed; he would have it inscribed on every pulpit, and recorded in every human heart; and yonder, where he sits with cherubim and seraphim falling at his feet, it is written upon his blazing diadem, "The friend of publicans and sinners."

My brethren, my beloved brethren, what a type, what a pattern of love is this. And thus to love is the normal condition of humanity to which Jesus has come to restore us. Behold how he loved us! "He saved others," said his enemies, "himself he could not save;" how could he, since it was by the sacrifice of himself that others were to be saved? Let us cultivate a love like this. It is to be cultivated; it is not an impulse, but a principle; it is not natural to us in our fallen state, but is a fruit of the spirit, and is to be habitually nourished and strengthened. Recollect we have no evidence of piety, if we are destitute of this love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." "He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." Without this love we can never enter heaven; nor, if admitted there, would it be heaven to us.

But I will not, I cannot, urge any argument of fear; let me press other and tenderer pleas. My brethren, if the blood of Christ be precious to us, let us love one another; it is by that blood this precept is consecrated and charged upon us. If the truth, the cause of Christ, be dear to us, let us love one another; the triumph of that truth, the success of that cause, depend upon our harmony, "That they all may be one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me." Lastly, the farewell, dying words of one dear to us always sink deep in our hearts; then, let, oh, let this last parting entreaty of the Redeemer be engraven on our souls, let it be incorporated into our very being—rebuking our selfishness—correcting our prejudices—calming our passions—expanding our affections—binding us, not in denominational, but in Christian union. He that loves his party more than the image of God in his brother—though that image be stamped on inferior metal, and very imperfect—really loves his party more than Christ, and himself more than everything.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;

as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"—a love not only in spite of differences, but in spite of ingratitude and injuries—a love linking us all to Christ, and each to the other, by ties which shall outlive every earthly connection, which shall become stronger and closer and dearer with each revolving cycle of eternity. God grant that this love may flow from his own heart, and circulate through all our hearts! May it evermore dwell in us all richly! "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now, unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."



J. C. Granberry

PROGRESS IN SIN.

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And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?—2 *Kings*, viii, 13.

The Bible is a remarkable book in many respects. Within its own pages, in the very matter and manner of its revelations, abound the clearest evidences of its Divine origin. It contains the profoundest truths, which when revealed commend themselves to human reason, but had never been discovered by reason in her unaided researches. It publishes a law so pure and spiritual and sublime, that the conscience is compelled to acknowledge its authority, though by it severely condemned, and even the heart which delights in sin cannot so completely vitiate its moral tastes and susceptibilities, as not to reverence this perfection of spiritual beauty and grandeur. It tears from the heart every mask by which it was self-deceived and deceiving to others, and lays bare its desperate wickedness, while at the same time it brings into distincter consciousness and livelier exercise those yearnings after deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the attainment of a higher than earthly good, which can be satisfied only through the provisions of the Gospel. Its doctrines have become the standard of truth, and its statutes the standard of right for the enlightened world; its maxims are universally quoted as the highest wisdom, and literature provides a sacred department, in which its poetry and prose may be kept at a hallowed distance from the gems and glories of mere human genius. Could man have formed these treasures of gold and pearls and diamonds? Could he have built these heavens of truth? Could he have kindled this sun of unsullied and intense splendor?

So much for the subject-matter of the Bible; now look at its

method. It is not a systematic creed or code. It was not given to us by a single writer, or in a single age. It consists of a large number of books. They were written at different periods, extending through a long course of centuries. The earliest portion dates back beyond doubt to the very beginning of history and literature as they have descended to us; the last appeared soon after the glories of the Augustan age. The authors were widely diverse in intellectual culture. We have histories and biographies which record facts full of moral interest and instruction with great beauty, and yet with the utmost simplicity and with slight comment; collections of proverbs which come down with condescending grace to the rules of temporal prudence, and rise up with lofty dignity to the principles of Divine wisdom; psalms so noble that they would become the golden harps of angels, and yet such an outpouring of contrition and supplication and acknowledgment of mercy as suit only man in his depths of shame and woe, a wail as from a broken heart now trembling from those chords, and anon a strain swept thence so joyous and exultant and adoring that we are borne up to the company of the blessed and close by the throne of God; prophecies which are a history of the world in advance, sometimes foreshowing events a few days remote, and again sweeping in all-comprehending vision through ages and centuries to the very end of time, minute in details about individuals and dates and places, and yet embracing the destinies of nations, the deep counsels of Jehovah, the conflicts of principalities and powers belonging to heaven, earth, and hell, and the vastest interests of humanity; letters written to individuals and churches for their instruction and confirmation. We have a gradual disclosure of truth and grace from the time of the fall to the time of the Apostles, a period containing distinctly-marked eras of religious light and observances, the Antediluvian, Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian, new prophecies coming out like stars in the firmament and at last losing themselves in the effulgence of the rising sun, new symbols and rites being given to prefigure the truth until the very substance was revealed in Christ. And yet amid all these diversities we find unity, consistency, one great plan developing, one holy spirit pervading the whole, one design towards whose accomplishment every part tends in its own force, and all harmoniously combine. The only explanation is found in the fact that God at divers times and in sundry manners has spoken unto us by the mouths and pens of His servants.

I have chosen for consideration an incident in the life of Hazael, briefly recorded in the inspired history of Israel, and containing a lesson and warning for the profit of all ages and all nations. I have thought it proper to preface the discussion of the subject by some general remarks concerning the Scriptures, with the design of recommending the careful perusal of all their parts, because they display the manifold wisdom of God, and are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Even in the historical books you will discover the richest lessons of a wisdom unto salvation. Let us now notice the few facts connected with the text, and try to deduce thence an important truth.

Benhadad, king of Syria, was sick, and hearing that Elisha had come to Damascus, he sends Hazael to inquire of the prophet whether he would recover. Elisha replied, "Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover; howbeit, the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die." That is, his disease was not incurable, but his death would be brought to pass by other means. He then gazed fixedly on the king's servant until he was ashamed; and the prophet burst into tears. Hazael inquired into the meaning of that weeping; and the prophet replied, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child." Hazael said, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" and Elisha answered, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." He returned to the king, told him that Elisha had predicted with certainty his recovery, on the morrow suffocated his master with a thick wet cloth spread over his face, and reigned in his stead. Soon followed the oppression, slaughter, and cruelty towards Israel, which, as foreseen, had brought tears to the prophet's eyes. Truly, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Hazael appeared to be filled with astonishment and mortification, at the atrocities predicted by the prophet. Were these feelings feigned or real? Did he only pay to virtue the tribute, and pronounce against himself the judgment, which have been extorted from hypocrisy in all ages? Did he have it in his heart to do all these abominations at the very moment he affected to be horror-stricken at the idea that he could ever be brought to such baseness

as to consent to them, and complained that the servant of the Lord had made such grave charges against him? Or have we not a right to suppose, is it not in accordance both with the intimations of this brief account and with the workings of human nature as shown in the world's history to conclude, that he revolted with sincere disgust and recoiled with sincere terror from the prospect of crimes so black and base, and wondered in his heart why Elisha should suspect him to be capable of committing them? He had never had a motive for such vast and foul cruelty, and do we not all know how little apt men are to suspect that they would ever violate principles of right and humanity, especially in a gross and infamous way, before they have been placed in a position which furnished inducements and temptations to do so? We must remember that every man has in his own conscience a testimony against sin, and in the better feelings of his own heart a repugnance towards it, especially in the earlier stages of life, ere that conscience has been blinded, and that heart debased by familiarity with vice and crime. He must revere goodness though he may not possess sufficient strength of principle to practice it, and must condemn wickedness though his lusts and passions may lead him to its perpetration. How ready men are to censure and denounce, in the most unmeasured terms, those sins from which they themselves have been preserved either by a peculiar temperament or by lack of motive and opportunity. Hazael, while a servant, who executed his master's decrees without the responsibility of fixing them, had not the power of oppression and massacre on a large scale, nor was he urged by ambition to attempt such schemes. No doubt he gave himself credit, as we do ourselves, for his freedom from crimes against which his circumstances alone had shielded him. But when he saw the chance of ascending the throne, he had not virtue to prevent him from seizing it by the assassination of his king; and once grasping the sceptre, he indulged the royal propensity of invading and subduing neighboring kingdoms, and soon suppressed all qualms of conscience and sickness of heart at the most relentless cruelty. Israel, deserted by God for their idolatries, suffered as had been foretold. Hazael became by his own verdict a *dog*, mean and cruel. He was not the first, or the last, to pronounce beforehand the harshest condemnation of his own guilt.

Does it still seem strange to you that he should have expressed so great abhorrence towards a course which he soon pursued, unless it

were sheer hypocrisy? Then I ask you, How would David have felt, with regard to his conduct in the matter of Uriah, before the charms of Bathsheba were displayed to him? Do you not remember with what hot wrath he pronounced sentence against himself unwittingly, when Nathan the prophet related his act under the disguise of a parable, and the king was not brought to a sense of his sin until the prophet added, "Thou art the man?" Do you not remember also how Peter with sincere ardor affirmed that he would follow Jesus to the death, though all others should forsake Him, and yet that very night denied Him with oaths and bitter cursing? These were far better men than Hazael, but their lives teach a similar lesson, viz: that under temptation we are often led to crimes which we had loathed and hated, and which we would never have suspected ourselves to be capable of committing, had not the temptation occurred.

I announce this proposition: Exposure to strong temptation and a long course of evil often lead men to a depth of vice and an extremity of crime from the bare contemplation of which they would once have shrunk with disgust and terror; they would have resented with burning indignation as an unwarranted insult a warning from the best friend to avoid such infamy, and would have sincerely expressed a preference for the poorest and obscurest condition to wealth and rank acquired by such means.

You will notice that in this proposition I mention two influences, the one arising from a man's situation, and the other from his own previous course; for both forces co-operate to form his character and determine his conduct. I do not intend to apologize for crime, or exempt the criminal from responsibility, by attributing it to the force of the circumstances amid which he is placed. Joseph fled when strongly enticed to sin, and Daniel proved faithful to Jehovah, amid the profligacy of a court, and against the decree of his king. We are not the mere slaves of our circumstances, but are endowed with the power of will to bend them to our own purposes, and by the aid of Divine grace may purify and strengthen our virtues in the fires which were kindled to consume them, and the conflicts which were waged to conquer them. But, beyond all dispute, circumstances do have great influence over us, and we may learn from this fact two lessons: one of charity, not too stringently to judge our fellows, without knowing the violence of the temptation to which they yielded.

Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done, we partly may compute,
But never what's resisted.

The other of caution, to avoid occasions of temptation, or, if we are necessarily placed among them, to watch and pray with peculiar earnestness that we be not overcome. But in a man's own heart and habits you will find either a readiness to embrace the occasion of sin when it shall occur, or else a virtue to resist it. When the spark of temptation, struck out amid the collisions of life as fire from a flint smitten by steel, falls upon a vast magazine of lust and passion, inflammable and explosive materials in the heart, wide-spread devastation ensues. Those tempers might have slumbered there without the knowledge of the person in whom they exist or of others, had not the event occurred to excite the temptation, and the event may have been without his choice or expectation. On the other hand, the event might have transpired without these terrible results, had not those passions previously existed, though dormant. Do we not all know that the tiger in a man's heart, his ferocity of temper, his dire revenge, has slept for years, and been quiet and harmless as a lamb, until, aroused by some provocation, it has sprung upon its victim with merciless cruelty? Or, to illustrate the gradual concurrence of these internal and external forces as we most usually witness it, hidden within the heart of the infant is a germ of depravity. It soon develops and shoots forth. Drawing nourishment from the soil in which it is placed, having the fatal power of growing alike amid the sunshine of prosperity and the rains of adversity, and surrounded by a favorable atmosphere of worldly influence, it increases and strengthens until it has waxed to the size of a great tree, its roots deeply imbedded and firmly intertwined in the earth, its rugged trunk towering aloft, and its wide-spread boughs laden with deadly fruit.

To be impressed with this truth, cast your eye over society; review the history of our race. What a variety of character is presented to our view—what different shades and grades of sin. Here is a luxuriant, there a stunted growth of iniquity. Or, to adopt the old comparison of the soul to a sheet of paper, here is one with a few pale stains, there another much defiled and blurred, and yonder a third which is one foul blot. Whence this diversity? I do not

deny a difference in the original moral texture of men, in the absolute and comparative strength of the various appetites, propensities, and tempers, from birth. But this is by no means adequate to account for the vast dissimilarity of character which prevails throughout our globe.

> Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
> Corrupts our race and taints us all,

every one is born with an unholy nature, in which are enclosed the elements of all sin. Those least liable to one sin may be most prone to another; and instances are not rare of the grievous disappointment of early promise—virtuous and amiable youths becoming men of the most depraved and atrocious lives. Nero, Rome's young Emperor, weeps that he has ever learned to write, because he must sign a decree for the execution of a criminal, and gives fair promise of the restoration of morality and refinement to a city where abounded the most inhuman and scandalous sins; yet soon that tender-hearted, blushing boy is converted into the most execrable monster and tyrant, murdering his own mother, and surpassing all others in impurity and barbarity. But leaving out of question, just now, the direct operations of Divine grace on the heart, the difference must be chiefly attributed to two causes: 1. The influence of different circumstances, both those over which they had no control—as the land of their birth, the character of their parents, and the society in which they were raised; and those for which they are responsible—as the occupations they select, the associates they voluntarily seek or allow, &c. 2. The influence of their own habits of thought, feeling, and action. Here is a monster of iniquity, an outcast from all decent society, who drinks down sin with greediness, and is restrained from no abomination, either by fear of God or regard for man—a beast in lust and a fiend in temper. There is another not so far gone, and yet travelling the same road; the difference lies only in the length of time during which they have pursued the common path; this one will soon be as far advanced as that. Here is a third who has lived more years than either of those, but either has had fewer temptations and greater restraints, or else has resisted vigorously his evil inclinations and cultivated virtuous sentiments; hence he is comparatively an unstained man.

Enter with me the court-house. See that man in the prisoner's box. He is charged with the malicious murder of a fellow man. His

face may now wear upon its features legible impressions of guilt and wretchedness, from which you look away in disgust, or he may have the aspect of an honorable gentleman. But listen, as witness after witness relates the horrid details of his crime, perhaps contrived with deliberate malignity, perhaps executed as quickly as conceived upon sudden temptation. And thus, for revenge or money, he hurries an immortal spirit into the presence of the great God, and wrings the hearts of parents, wife, and children, now childless, widowed, orphaned. The jury must find him guilty; the judge must pronounce the sentence of death; the story of his crime and condemnation must pass from mouth to mouth of horror-stricken people, and be published in the papers of the land; the gallows must be erected, and in the presence of a shuddering, sickened crowd, he must hang by the neck until he is dead, dead, dead. And yet that man, wretch though you justly call him now, was once an infant, pressed fondly to a mother's bosom, and receiving the admiring kiss of a mother's love; over his countenance played the smile of innocence and affection, and his amusing prattle was the merriment of the house. Did the mother imagine the time would ever come when that child, whose face was overshadowed with grief by her slightest frown of displeasure, and whose eyes filled with tears at her gentlest word of reproof—that child with spirit so confiding, whose anger, if excited, would soon pass away and be forgotten—could ever become the obdurate, unprincipled perpetrator of a crime sufficient to freeze the blood of the ordinarily humane, and demanding from outraged justice the taking of his own life as the penalty? Many happy days did that boy spend at school, or in wandering over the fields, or playing upon the streets, his laugh as loud and free, his heart as gleeful and generous, as warm and hopeful, as those of his merry companions. Then he wept at scenes and tales of suffering; then he quaked at deeds of blood. By what spell of infernal magic has this strange transformation been wrought? How has this innocent babe, this lovely boy, this noble-hearted youth, been changed into the degraded, blood-thirsty wretch? Ah! by no magic-spell, by no mysterious witchery, has this been done, but by a regular law of the moral nature or of Divine appointment; not in a moment, not in a day, but through a process which progressed steadily during years; slowly it may have been, imperceptibly to others, unconsciously to himself, his heart has been hardening, blackening, coming under the dominion of

selfish and diabolical tempers; and now you have the accursed result.

By a fixed law of God, I say, this moral transformation has been wrought. "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Life is the great seed-time; through eternity, the harvesting will last. We now scatter the seed; we will then reap the abundant fruits. But each period of life is a seed-time, and each following period a harvest. Youth is reaping what had been sowed in childhood; manhood is an autumn, during which are ripened and gathered the fruit of life's spring-time. You reap what you sow in kind, but a more or less prolific increase in quantity. "For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." The fact is as plain now as in the days of Eliphaz, who testifies: "Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same." And mark this difference: that good seed may mature its fruit, the heart must be prepared for its reception, and the crop must be carefully tended, and the grass and weeds must be kept out. But fling broadcast the seeds of evil; do not watch, do not assist them; go and sleep, if you please; you may be sure that they will come up and thrive rankly.

Life is a warfare between the principles of good and evil. It begins with the dawn of thought, and progresses to the hour of death. Sin, though an usurper, is the reigning power from birth, and occupies a well-fortified citadel. But the tyrant has not undisputed sway. Virtue, though not reigning, asserts her just claims to the throne, and struggles to gain it. Every day, slight skirmishes occur; and occasionally there are fought pitched battles, in which the contending forces are all brought into the field, and the gravest interests are at stake. Do you not remember many of these spiritual conflicts between desire and conscience, the love of sin and the sense of duty? When sin gains a decided victory, the nobler sentiments are like a defeated army, with thin and dispirited ranks. They do not surrender easily, however. But triumph follows triumph; the virtuous feelings give battle less readily, and quickly retreat; at length, they are thoroughly subdued, and sin rules without opposition or fear.

Many specific instances of this truth might be cited; it applies to every form which sin assumes, and to every individual by whom it is practiced. The boy stammers forth a falsehood to his questioning

parent, that he may conceal some fault and escape punishment; but shame trips the tongue and burns the cheek, clearly disclosing his guilt. The man will lie without a falter in his voice or a change in his countenance. Have you ever seen a youth, in a fit of passion, utter his first oath, and then stand still and silent, as though his tongue had been paralyzed and his frame petrified, his conscience convicting him of a great crime? In a few years, he will pour out oaths the most blasphemous, and curses the most fearful, without compunction. A man lives in idleness or extravagance, wilfully exceeding his means, and plunging into debt; pressed by creditors, too lazy to work, ashamed to beg, unwilling to deny himself the luxuries to which he is used, or to reduce the splendor in which he has lived, he at length tries to extricate himself from difficulty by forging his neighbor's hand or plundering his drawer, or by some other means not less swindling though more safe. A young man plays a game of cards with some little stake, not to make money, but to increase the interest of the sport, with a few companions, who wish to beguile the hour of its weariness or the heart of its care. He contracts a fondness for the amusement, and spends hours at it every night; he is led on to bet larger and larger sums, stimulated by success, or rendered desperate by losses; he acquires a disrelish for securer and slower methods of getting riches, and a passion for gambling; he visits the hells which abound in our cities, hardens his heart to adamant against every generous feeling, and plays himself into utter poverty, or, what is more galling to an honorable man, into wealth gotten unjustly from families thereby impoverished and ruined. You have noticed the blush of offended modesty, as it spread over the face of an ingenuous youth at some indelicate allusion. But he accustoms himself to listen to the lewdest conversations, learns to laugh at the coarsest jests, indulges his kindling passions by reading obscene books, and enters on a course of unrestrained licentiousness. Need I repeat the oft-told tale of the drunkard's career? It commences with a sparkling glass of wine on a festive occasion, when the coiled adder is not seen or suspected to be near. It is continued in the private room of a friend, to brighten intellect and enliven the soul. Then, in a stealthy way, the bar-room is entered, and strong drink is demanded. Intoxication at night; headache, shame, repentance, in the morning. The system becomes used to the stimulant, demands it as a necessity, is burning up by slow fires every day, is often inflamed by extraor-

dinary potions. The generous, hopeful, intelligent youth has become a slave in fetters, a doomed victim, tormented before death—a dog—worse than a dog—more grossly indulging his appetites, and falling into gutters where the dog is too cleanly to lie.

Learn, O man, he that tries to lead a holy life is like one who rolls a heavy stone up the steep side of a lofty hill; the tendency of nature is to resist his effort, and bring the stone to the vale again. Steadily, with patience and perseverance, must he struggle on, glad even of small progress. If for a moment he relax his effort, it will roll back to the foot of the hill, and he must begin the task anew. But the servant of sin is like one who starts the rock from the top of the hill; the force of nature co-operates with him. On, on, with ease and speed, it rolls; he need not push it now; its velocity rapidly increases; such momentum has it gathered, that all his strength would not suffice to stop it, but, with fearful swiftness and force, it rushes downward. Alas! how we gravitate by our own nature towards earth and hell!

A virtuous heart is like a most delicate musical instrument. There is nothing half so beautiful on earth, and it gives forth the richest melody that is heard this side of the gates of heaven. But the breath of sin will tarnish its exquisite polish; the least rudeness will snap some string, and make its notes discordant. There are a thousand avenues to the heart which must be carefully guarded, if we would keep sin out. Some enticing form presents itself to your eye, some charmer sings in your ear. You gaze, you listen. Thought dwells on the forbidden fruit; desire is excited; sense, imagination, lust, are indulged; the will yields, and the deed is done.

In conclusion, let us trace the downward progress. Its outward steps are evident. The keeping of bad company, forsaking home and church, visiting places unfavorable to virtue, jesting at sacred things and the restraints of morality, plunging headlong into depths of iniquity, selling one's self to the devil.

But let us attempt an analysis of the internal process of degeneracy.

1. There is the force of habit. It inclines us to repeat our acts, and enables us to do so with greater ease. Its power augments with each repetition, induced by itself in part. Every one knows that habit renders things which were offensive agreeable, things which were difficult easy, things which were indifferent necessary, and

things which were pleasing beloved to idolatry. Each indulgence in sin helps to form a habit of sin; it drags on other indulgences, which are an effect of the previous conduct, and a cause of sins to come; thus, as you this year reap the harvest of last year's sowing, you sow a larger field, and prepare for a vaster harvest; every turn of the windlass wraps about you another coil of a chain, each of whose links is hard enough to be broken. To give a single illustration, how quickly a man forms the custom of swearing, so that oaths and curses drop unconsciously from his lips.

2. In addition to the strength of mere habit, we give greater activity and vehemence to evil desire and passion by indulging them. A man cherishes the love of money, and seeks with undue anxiety to accumulate, until gold becomes his god, and his whole life an idolatrous worship of it, and avarice eats up every good feeling. Or he fosters ambition after place and power, applause and fame, until it becomes a grasping, insatiate, absorbing craving, which leaves no room for less selfish and more sacred principles. Anger and resentment are nourished, until the spirit is thoroughly soured, or filled with revenge. So with all the appetites, propensities, and passions. They are fed with fuel, and flame with a violence which cannot be quenched.

3. While the bad tempers are gaining strength, the better sentiments are dying for want of culture, and man is losing his self-control. The stream is swollen, and rushes with torrent speed, and man, like a log without power of resistance, is swept down.

4. Conscience once spoke loud in warning against sin, and in reproach when it was committed. Often it restrained the man; and even when overcome, he felt uneasy and alarmed. But now that voice has been so long disregarded, it is silenced, or speaks so indistinctly that you hear it not amid the shouts of revelry, and the clamor of desire, and the cry of passion. You sin without rebuke.

5. The mind is blinded. He loses his sense of right and wrong, good and evil. He cannot see the truth. What vision he has is perverted. Once there was a deformity in sin, a beauty in holiness, but he walks in darkness now. The Gospel is hid unto him.

6. The heart hardens. Its feelings were once tender, but now they are callous. Nothing can move him. Not even the mercy of God, not the hope of heaven, not the fear of hell, not the triumphant death of a Christian, not the unhappy death of a sinner, not all these

combined, can stir his dead, can warm his icy, can soften his stony heart.

7. The Holy Spirit, long grieved, many times repulsed, leaves him—leaves him to himself. He is given up to his own lusts. He is abandoned to his own folly. He is undisturbed in his ease and pleasures. His companions wonder at the quiet and security which he exhibits. The explanation is, that a benumbing chilliness has overpowered him, and all sense of danger is lost, as he closes his eyes, and sinks into a frozen slumber scarcely less profound than that in which it soon ends, the sleep of an eternal death.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word."

Chs. Rinnigrode

THE POWER OF FAITH.

BY REV. CHARLES MINNIGERODE, D. D.,
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All things are possible to him that believeth.—*Mark*, ix, 23.

"All things are possible to him that believeth," but without faith it is not only impossible to please God, but to do and accomplish anything at all.

Such is the testimony of *science*—science, the proud edifice of human thought and labor, to which age after age, and nation after nation, have made their contributions, and raised it fairer, loftier, than ever Babel's tower rose on Shinar's plain. On its watch-towers sages are standing, deeper read in the wonders of the heavens than the Magi of the East; in its porches a philosophy is taught, more cognizant of the secrets of nature than were the mysteries of Samothrace and Eleusis; and in its fields a power is at work, which levels every mountain, and elevates every valley, and makes its pathway in the deep waters; which builds the triumphal arch of human civilization, the forces of nature chained to her car, her messengers outtravelling the speed of light, her arms encircling the earth from the rising to the setting sun.

Beloved, it is only he who has gathered but the scum of its teachings, or like a butterfly fluttered about, and here and there sipped its sweets, that can boast of science as rivalling faith, or antagonistical to its revelations. The true scholar never forgets the rock from which science is hewn; he knows that it rests on premises which are independent of its syllogisms and inductions, the everlasting verities which we obtain by faith alone, and not by ratiocination; that the ultimate grounds of all real science are *assumptions*, axioms which bear no demonstration, principles discovered by intuition, and reverently received as *the facts from which* to reason. Science is not

creative, but *deductive*. It cannot project premises upon nothing. If it were possible, that would isolate man in the universe, and change its steady faithful light, which is to irradiate every dark cavern and lay open every mystery, into an ignis fatuus; its fabric would be a castle in the air, its teachings useless, hopeless hypotheses, fleeting fancies, which in chaotic confusion would tumble one over the other, and pass away like dreams before every succeeding wave of imagination. No! Science consists only in connection with God and God's world! It is not self-taught, but "taught of God." To her wondering gaze nature lies open, and on expanded wings she passes through the universe, and "sweeps suns and stars and galaxies in her range," then kneels reverently at the throne of God, to behold the truth of every vision, and hear the interpretation of all things, and meekly she closes her pinions on her breast, and returns to earth—in the sweat of the brow, in the laboratory, in the study, with deep thought and unwearied labor, to spell out the unutterable things heard in the height, and read the name of God written in every law, and find His truth in the appearances of His world.

It is this intuition, these assumptions of science, *this basis of faith*, which lays her foundation upon grounds everlasting. No wonder, the first sages were the priests of the earth, her priests the teachers of her children. And to this day, the true scholar, the earnest man of science, is a priest, ministering at the altar of nature and nature's God. Resting on the fundamental truths which are revealed to faith, and called self-evident because incapable of demonstration, he carries them through the created universe, its matter and its mind; and by their light examines every process, and by their rule measures every depth; and step by step deduces one truth after another, and links them together in a chain with which he threads his way through the labyrinth of the phenomenal world; and calls forth its hidden powers, and combines them to new forces, and applies them for new purposes, at every step verifying his processes by exhibiting the "imprimatur" of its germinal truth—till he has made the circuit; and from the sanctuary of the student's cell he steps forth, like *Newton* carrying the tables on which are engraved the everlasting laws of God's creation, or with the prophet-eye of a *Leverrier* descrying unknown worlds, and bidding stars to rise on the distant firmament in obedience to those laws.

Our *daily life* furnishes a more accessible witness to the same

truth. Human society is so constituted, that it rests on the mutual exercise of *faith* on the part of its members. I cannot trust my neighbor without believing in his truthfulness. I cannot esteem him without assuming the dignity of his character. I cannot love him unless the eye of faith has found the way to his heart. I cannot labor without relying upon the coming reward. I cannot undertake anything without looking for issues appreciated only by faith. My every calculation, my daily work, the merchant's busy agency, the statesman's plans and schemes, the legislator's care and circumspection—all become impossibilities without *the substratum of faith*, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Yes, and that *hope*, which is our constant companion, which visits with its smiles the darkest mind, and lays her balm on every wounded spirit: what is it but "the soul reposing on the breast of faith," the soul enjoying already the vision which faith has conjured up, and laying her hand on possessions the existence of which is revealed only to the believing mind? And is it strange or unreasonable, is it not—humanly speaking—by necessity, and in perfect harmony with that constitution which God gave to man, when He made him receptive of impressions from without and from above, that His revelation appeals to *this* faculty, and makes it the *only medium* through which He can be found and possessed, and His truth incorporated in our life?

"Faith," saith the apostle, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is "that feeling or faculty within us, by which what is future and what is invisible is assumed as real, and becomes the ruling element for our action in the present; the faculty by which the future becomes to our minds greater than the present, and what we do not see more powerful to influence us than that we do see." Our Saviour expressed the same idea when He upbraided the Pharisees: "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only," who prefer the present to the future, the visible to the invisible, the earthly to the heavenly? He lays His finger on the true point at issue; and what is true here in the special case of "honor," is true of everything else—possessions, pleasures, gains, gratifications, &c. *Buried in the present*, or looking up to what is before and yet to come, looking aloft to what is higher and more valuable, and worth the surrender of the moment—*that is the question!*

It has often been illustrated by plain cases in an ascending scale. The child which forbears to eat the forbidden fruit, because of the threatened punishment, the certainty of which overcomes with its anticipated terrors the temptation before him; the boy who submits to the drudgery of the school-room and his daily task, because he has regard to the promised reward of knowledge and distinction; the victim of vice, who forswears the intoxicating cup or the gambler's hell, because to the eye of his mind are revealed, with a power that claims obedience, the issues of the diverging roads of indulgence or reformation; the man who in his business transactions overlooks many a slight loss or sacrifice, counting on the increased popularity he gains, and the sure reward that is to pour into his lap; the speculator who risks his all on one cast, in the mad persuasion that his scheme cannot fail, but must bring him in the coveted treasure: all—in however subordinate a sphere, however unwarranted the premises of some, however low the aim—*all act upon the principle of faith.* The life of most men is just a fluctuation between these two dominant influences—the strength of the present, or the power of faith. The warfare is going on; now the one, now the other master bears the rule. The secret of every failure is the want of persevering faith. Victory is only theirs (whatever goal they may have placed before them) who acknowledge the power of the invisible, who obey the influence of faith!

The power of faith lies in this: It brings the object ever nearer, and its eager gaze makes it clearer and more to be desired; and yet, it keeps up the stimulus and the fascination of suspense and excitement; it brings it so near, that hope already has a foretaste, and it seems *almost* within the grasp of the eager soul. Yet it is *still to be obtained*, and not yet in full possession, not yet exhausted, not yet ours to satisfaction or satiety; *it still has its coming reward!* Can we not see, then, how deeply harmonized this principle is with the very constitution of our mind and heart? And, again, how *rational* is the position of Scripture in proclaiming faith as the means of success: "All things are possible to him that believeth?"

This statement, it is true, finds its perfect fulfilment *only* in the *Christian;* for he alone pursues, not only the highest, but what is alone *the true, the real object of faith.* But it is *approximately true* in everything. Where a man has *faith*, his object—whatever it may be, good or bad—becomes the one ruling thought and aim of his life.

We know what a power is possessed by *one idea*. The man who scatters his strength, and engages in a multiplicity of pursuits, rarely excels in any, rarely meets with marked success. The Polyhistor, the man who dabbles in every branch of science or literature, is great in none. But when an earnest mind selects a "specialty," and makes all the rivers of science and art tributaries to this one stream on which he is embarked, *he* leaves his mark upon his age. Just so in every department of life. Let a man be possessed with one great thought and problem, to which he is ready to sacrifice all, for which he counts all else but loss; and the very difficulties in his way will but nerve his soul, and make the goal he runs for more desired. His every thought and power and interest are absorbed in it, his soul hungers for it more and more, and thirsts and craves for it with ever keener zest; it becomes to him life, and wealth, and health, and happiness, and all; it is *his religion*, for which he gives up all else, to which he consecrates his labor and his strength: *that man cannot fail!* If he does not actually gain the victory, and seize the crown, and plant his trophy, he will fall on the battle-field of life, still unsubdued, his wounds in his breast—that breast which was faithful to the last to the idol of his soul!

From his earliest days, the Roman believed he was destined to rule. Seven hundred years could not wear out his faith nor abate his ardor; but after seven hundred years of struggle and combat, the world lay at his feet.

It was faith which nerved the heart of France to the horrors of her revolution, and lashed it into mad rebellion against the rights of God and man. *The spell was on her*, and she quaked not in her march through blood and terrorism; and she quailed not before the coalition of all Europe, and carried her eagles to every clime and land. Nor did she falter in her course, and admit the allied armies on her soil, till she was disenchanted with the object of her faith, and woke affrighted, as from a fearful dream!

The gentle shepherdess of Dom-Rémy, clad in steel, and carrying the oriflamme, rallying the faltering followers of the Dauphin, it was her faith—the fanatical faith, perhaps, which she placed in her own divine visions and holy calling—that nerved her for the deadly contest, and gave her power over the armies of France, and struck terror into the victory-crowned chivalry of England! Only after she had conducted the Dauphin to Rheims, and Charles VII had been

crowned—only when her mission was completed—her star began to set; and Joan of Arc exhaled her pure, romantic life on the fagots of Rouen; but her faith had triumphed!

Like a second Noah, who for one hundred and twenty years was the laughing-stock of his generation for building the ark, Columbus braved the sneers and coldness of his contemporaries. The belief in his heart that he should find a new world, he ventured on the broad Atlantic; his faith sustained him through all the long, long days and nights, and all the storms of sea, and the more threatening dangers of mutiny. On he steered, westward, ever westward. What though persecution afterwards assailed him, and ingratitude put him in chains! That cry of "Land!" "Land!" ever rang in his ears. That reward of his faith, when he planted the cross on St. Salvador—it was worth the sufferings of an age.

All these are *victories of faith.* History and our daily life are full of them. And we record these here to show the analogy, and how the same principle prevails everywhere. But the *issues* must depend on *the nature of its object.* And *here* is the difference between the *Christian* and *all others.* As it is with the Christian's hope, "their rock is not as our rock," so it is with his faith. Many others, like him, may walk by faith, rather than sight; but if the object be earthly, its reward must be so too. He may gain the gold for which he hungered, and for the sake of which he stifled every generous feeling. He may seize the honor for which he sacrificed his peace. He may revel in excesses which but sink him lower than the brute. Ah! but he can look for naught beyond; *he has had his reward here;* he cannot complain if his sowing does not bring up the fruit of eternal life; he cannot complain even if here in this life he suffers shipwreck, and dies a martyr to his hopeless faith, without ever attaining fruition; he cannot complain, if, in the world to come, he rises to "the resurrection of damnation."

Nor is it every religious faith which gains the final victory. There be many a deluded soul, which, in utter selfishness, just makes a bargain of "profit and loss," and foregoes the sweets and sins of life, not in the heart and disposition, but in open practice, to gain a heaven of more lasting gratification, (oh! what a heaven for a soul of such tastes!) or which slaves it along in the bondage of penance and self-torture, to merit the rewards of eternal life! Between worldliness, even as turned upon eternity, on one side, and superstition, as

darkening the portals of free grace, on the other, behold the soul passes free and victorious *that believes in* CHRIST! Ah! brethren, *Christ*, the object of our faith! *Christ*, our religion! *Christ*, our life! *Christ*, the hope of glory! *Here* is a radical difference! Here the alone object that can last, for it alone is true; and here the power which must insure the victory! *Believe in Christ, and there can be no failure!*

In Christ there is *certain escape from ruin*, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and "His blood cleanseth from all sin." In Him, there is *certain possession* of all the glories and treasures of heaven. "When He shall appear, those 'whose life is hid in Him' shall appear with him in glory." "Where I am, ye shall be also!"

But this is only the lower strata of the Christian faith. There is a *beauty*, a *loveliness, and attraction*, in Christ, as the object of faith, before which every lower object fades into insignificance. It creates a new affection, which casts out the world and its charms, and fills the soul with the highest, most enduring passion. For the greater the drafts of the believing soul, the richer the reward; and Christ becomes the more precious, the more the soul goes out to seek and find Him!

Aye, there is *a compulsion of love* in Christ; there is *a constraining power* in the contemplation of His person and His love, which captivates the soul, and carries it along to overcome every difficulty, to triumph over every obstacle, to endure to the end, and find its life *only* in the entire and eternal consecration of every thought, feeling, faculty, power, means of soul, body, spirit, life, and death: "*For me to live is* CHRIST!"

And there is in Christ *a promise of strength and help*, the consciousness of which becomes an impenetrable coat of mail, from which every arrow of terror or fear falls off, and a source of power which no human trust could give: "My grace is sufficient for thee!" *sufficient* in the day of prosperity, when ease and riches may betray our faith; *sufficient* in the hour of temptation and the season of trial, when the remnant of sin may start anew into life, and fear may shake the heart; *sufficient* to break every fetter; *sufficient* to bear meekly the thorn in the flesh; *sufficient* to carry us triumphantly through the battle of life!

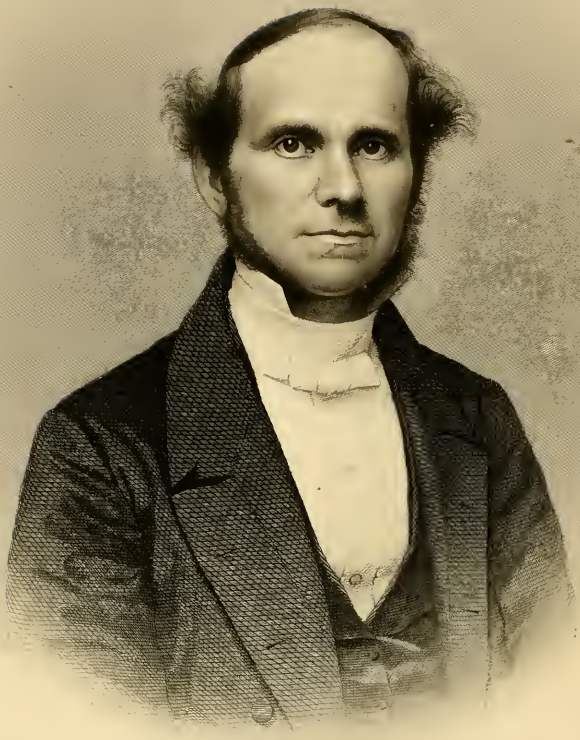
If *Christ* be our object of faith, if *Christ* our life; if we are *in*

Christ, and have our being, our hopes and aims, our strength and righteousness, our will and heaven in Him, it becomes the centre from which radiate new light and life and strength, new thoughts and feelings and hopes, upon our whole existence and all the objects around us. "All things become new;" the truth is revealed "as it is in Jesus." Sin is crimson with the blood of Christ. Mercy sure and precious in the gift of the Only-begotten; self abased in the righteousness of faith; strength unconquerable in the abiding presence and love of Him "to whom all power is given, in heaven and in earth;" holiness, the very craving of the soul, because it changes us into the image of Christ! This is the faith which nursed the heroes of the Bible and the church—a St. Paul, a Luther, Henry Martyn!

Ah! brethren, this faith—this faith in the atoning power of Christ's death, in the prevailing efficacy of His intercession, in the faultless plea of His righteousness, the certain presence of His spirit, in the unalterable faithfulness of His love—it can *do* all things, and it can *bear* all things. *Christ always with me,* sharing my cross and bearing my burden. *Christ always with me,* giving me His grace, and working in me "to will and to do." *Christ always with me,* in the hour of temptation, to cry to Him, "Lord, save, or I perish," and feel His helping hand; in the hour of weakness, to cry, "Lord, increase my faith"—"Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief;" and to learn that, "when I am weak, then I am strong." *Christ always with me,* with me, in the trials of this life, "as thy days, so shall thy strength be!" with me in the hour of death, "because I live, ye shall live also." Aye, *who is he that overcometh the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Yes, "all things are possible to him that believeth!"

He looks upon his sins buried in the sea of blood that flows from Golgotha, and cries victory! He raises his eye trustfully to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, assured that there is no condemnation for him in Christ, and cries victory! He passes the allurements of sin, and they fade before the glory of heaven, which is shed on his path, and cries victory! He meets the enemy, who like a devouring lion obstructs his path, and with the Spirit's sword he slays the fiend, and cries victory! Death comes and lays his icy hand upon the heart; but heaven is open, and the Redeemer, standing on the right hand of power, beckons the travelling soul to seize the crown of glory, and, with his last breath, he cries victory! The por-

tals of heaven open, and the hosts of angels and archangels, welcoming the soul of the faithful, shout victory, victory! And, welcomed by the Lamb of God into the Kingdom of Heaven, raised out of the life of faith to the life of sight, out of hope to fruition, his prayers are changed to praises; and the armies of souls, redeemed like him by faith in Christ, join in the song of jubilee, "THANKS, THANKS BE UNTO GOD, WHO GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!"



Chas. H. Read

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION.

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Repent ye therefore, and be converted.—*Acts*, iii, 19.

The doctrine and duty of REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION TO GOD, in order to salvation, will never cease to be important, and a principal theme of discourse in this world, so long as men are found who are alienated from God, and wheresoever faithful ministers of Christ have access to their fellow men.

The blessed Saviour, the great teacher from heaven, opened His ministry with the plain assertion of this doctrine and duty, as bearing directly upon the condition and interests of *all* to whom He preached—all, without exception, who had not through the teachings of His prophets and heralds complied with these terms of salvation.

The disciples, who received the commission from Christ to preach His truth in His name, to the end that men might be saved—these, also, went everywhere, among all classes of society, preaching the doctrine and duty of repentance, and conversion to Christ, as things of universal concern and obligation, the invariable conditions of salvation from sin and hell, to all mankind.

The Epistles, also, abound in appeals and arguments setting forth this doctrine and duty; and in the closing book of the inspired canon, this same doctrine and duty are still and again endorsed by the Alpha and Omega—to be prominently maintained in the churches; whilst *heaven* and *hell* are there set one over against the other, the one as the final abode of the *penitent* and *converted*, and the other as the final abode of the *impenitent* and *unconverted*.

It is to be presumed that, among those to whom this discourse is addressed, there will be found *some* who are yet in their sins, without God, and without a scriptural hope of heaven. The divinely-

warranted terms of salvation are *yet to be complied with* by some of you, if you are to escape the death that never dies. By *preaching*, God saves them that truly repent and turn to Him. Our business, in preaching, is to bring the truths, whereby God convicts and converts sinners and edifies believers in the ways of holiness and peace, home to their consciousness and hearts. I come, then, to urge *this message*, in the name of God, upon all whom it concerns—"REPENT YE THEREFORE, AND BE CONVERTED."

Plain, straightforward language is consistent with true kindness, and best becomes this theme; with such language would I speak to my fellow men—my fellow sinners.

In addressing you as *sinners*, let it be understood that you are *not arraigned*, nor called upon to "repent and be converted," upon the ground that you are *exceptions* in the scale of general morality, or that you are *more ungodly* than your impenitent and unconverted neighbors and acquaintance around you. Our Saviour made no such discriminations in His preaching; but among sinners of every grade, and of all social positions, and in every path of wrong-doing, He and His true disciples went everywhere, urging the same immediate duty, and enforcing the appeal upon *all* with the same solemn and tremendous alternative of the soul's eternal ruin.

A *sinner*—be it then observed—is one who is *out of the right way;* it matters not by what particular path he departs from God, or by what particular forms of sin his alienation of heart and life is distinguished; he is one of that great multitude of whom the world is so full, of whom God has declared, "*They are* ALL *gone out of the way.*"

Among a thousand, yea, ten thousand sinners, there may not be found any two *alike* in the outward manifestation of the alienation of their hearts from God, their true and proper sovereign; and yet, as *all* lack the predominant principle of genuine allegiance to God, *this* is the just ground of His complaint against them, and of their condemnation in His sight; and upon *this basis* the text is applicable to *each one* of their entire number—to one as logically and as imperatively as to another. This statement and view of the case must, I think, be readily comprehended and assented to by all intelligent and candid minds. Let it be supposed, by way of illustration, that, as a father or master, you discover a predominant disposition in your household, among your children and servants, to neglect your proper

claims upon their regards and dutiful services; your righteous authority is not submitted to in the true spirit of reverence and love by any of them. No two of them, it may be, act out their disloyalty in *the same* way. This one uses your name disrespectfully; that one appropriates to his own selfish use and ends the supplies of the family, or the individual gifts conferred, without any proper appreciation of your careful and kind provision and bestowments; another heedlessly tramples upon the orderly regulations of the household, producing confusion and waste. Your approbation is not prized; your honor is not consulted; your interests are not contemplated; and in respect of each and all of them you find occasion, in the sorrow of grieved love and despised authority, to exclaim, "If I be a *father*, where is mine honor? If I be a *master*, where is my fear?" In such a case, the recital of the *different wrongs* done by each—the profanity of this, the selfishness of that, the heedlessness of another, the various vices and debasing associations, habits, and resorts—all of these will painfully affect you, each perhaps in a different way and degree; but the root of the difficulty, and the common cause of complaint with them all, is, that they are *alike* alienated in heart from you; they are *all* "gone out of the way." To sit down and discriminate as to the precise and distinguishing forms and paths of their rebellion—to cast up the exact amount and degree of their several offences—this will not lead to the peace of your mind, nor will it procure the approbation of your judgment or heart for any one of them. Moreover, should this individual offender seek to justify himself, because, forsooth, he had not committed the offence peculiar to another; or that one claim your favor because his course had been less public, or possibly less injurious or shameful than that of some others—these several pleadings at self-justification would be, in themselves, offensive, while as yet genuine love and loyalty were wanting in them all.

The self-justification of one, at the expense of another, where all were "*out of the way*," would virtually be the setting up of SIN, in some form and degree, as the law of your household; it could be regarded only by you as a subtle plea *for sin*, and for each individual's preferred mode of transgression; thus there would be added to the injury first done to your authority and feelings, an insult to your purity and good sense. What you would most earnestly desire, and most righteously demand, would be—that each and every one of

them should immediately and truly "REPENT and be CONVERTED" from *his* way; and in every case of *genuine* repentance and conversion that might occur, there would be *this feeling* common to them all—"Against thee have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, and am not worthy to be owned as thy child, or servant." Each one would see and feel *his own sin* most clearly and most deeply.

It is *alienation of the heart from God* that opens the door and leads the way to all the outward forms of sin. This it is that gives the sinner up to the various forms of temptation which may assail him. In *this* he diverges from the *right way;* and this alienation of the heart from God is the corrupt stream and force which sets in motion all the wheels of transgression.

The poison of the intoxicating cup may make one man taciturn, another noisy, another mirthful, another profane, another pugnacious—all alike drunken and debased, deranged and demoralized; so the poison of *apostacy in heart from God* may put on innumerable forms of debasement, and work out ever-varying kinds of mischief, and there shall possibly be found as many kinds of sinners as there are individual men, still one thing is true of them all—each one has departed from God, each is devoid of holiness, each is obnoxious to the Divine displeasure, and in the way to hell. Therefore, to each one does the appeal of the text apply with equal force, "REPENT AND BE CONVERTED."

The disposition, so common in the world among sinners of different classes, or of the same general class, to compare themselves one with another, and to justify themselves, each in *his own course* of alienation from God, in *his* impenitent and unconverted state and way, indicates most clearly an "*evil heart*," opposed to the holy claims and righteous rule of Jehovah. This disposition is utterly at variance with right apprehensions of the attributes and honor of God, and cannot coexist with true reverence for His law, or penitence for sin. Indeed, where true penitence is felt, whilst each sinner will deplore the sins of *others*, be they the same or different from his own, he will be apt to think worse of *himself* than of others, inasmuch as it is the proper office of the individual conscience in the bosom of a man to press upon *him* the searching authority of his Maker and Judge, to bring up into absorbing view and to produce an abasing sense of his own depravity and guilt.

Conscience, as a witness for God and an accuser of the individual

man for his own sins against God, to his own shame and peril, drives the truly convicted and penitent man away from all refuges such as the unhumbled and impenitent seek to find in the greater or less sins of other men.

The average impiety of other men around him is no shield or ground of justification to one who is disposed to be honest with himself and with his Maker. A *petty defaulter*, who should plead exemption from the duty of repentance and conversion, or from the enforcement of the sanctions of law, upon the ground that there were many other instances of defalcation as bad or even worse than his own, virtually repudiates the law of honesty, and pleads for a license to commit repeated *petty frauds*. Such a plea is subversive of the primary and fundamental principles of virtue and integrity, and a defence of the principle and practice of sin. Such an advocacy of *a little defalcation*, or wrong of any kind or degree, done toward God or man, is, in itself, one of the most high-handed insults to God, and one of the most injurious sentiments among men that can be committed or proclaimed. It goes to subvert the first ideas of moral virtue. It saps the foundations of private integrity and public justice. Give it play and room, let it work out its legitimate results unrestrained, and it would dethrone God himself.

What should we say of a worshipper of *graven images*, arraigned before his Maker for *that offence*, who should excuse himself, and decline immediate repentance and conversion, upon the plea that his neighbors worshipped *a greater number of idols*, or idols of a *greater size* than his own? He pleads for *his own idolatry!* Be it but *one image*, and that *a little one*, a *cheap* one, he pleads for *it;* and in pleading for that one idol, however small, he pleads against the only living and true God, and for idolatry in the principle of the thing. That little idol, harbored and defended, shows a heart quite "gone out of the way." Thus the habitual cherishing and advocacy of the least of all sins, (as men are accustomed to speak of "*little sins*,") and a refusal to "repent and be converted," proves a heart stoutly opposed to God and holiness, in league with the devil, and an abettor of moral anarchy.

We may compassionate infirm humanity, when, under the force of strong and sudden temptation, it falls into sin; and we may rejoice over it with holy joy when, in self-condemning abasement, it prostrates itself before God in the true spirit of repentance and con-

version; for such self-abasement, in view of its offence against the Divine rule of truth and purity, is true dignity and honor. But when apostate humanity habituates itself to known sin, in any form or degree, and pleads for it under any pretext, refusing to "repent and be converted," then, as we are true to God and moral virtue, we must approve of the solemn expostulation and warning of the Bible, wherein the God of Mercy and of Justice exclaims, "I will judge you, O house of Israel, *every one according to his way*, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not prove your ruin."

It is doubtless true that there are different degrees of guilt among impenitent and unconverted men, of which God himself is the only infallible judge; but as the spirit of sin is a spirit of delusion, and as every sinner is one to whom the language of inspiration may be applied, "*a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say is there not a lie in my right hand?*" hence it follows that the sinner, great or small, is not a competent witness in his own case. Each deceived and deceitful heart, in love with its own sins, and prone to evade the spirituality and extent of the law of God—prone, like Adam and Eve in the first transgression, to exculpate itself at the expense of others—prone to magnify the mote in a brother's eye, and to be unconscious of the beam in its own—such a heart will fail to make a proper estimate of its own inward depravity, or the evil of its outward conduct.

God only knows, and can reveal, the evil nature of sin. He has expressed His estimate of it in the expulsion from paradise, and the blight sent upon the entire earth as its theatre. He has expressed it in one general deluge by water, and in one partial destruction by fire. He has expressed it in the agonies of His Son Jesus Christ on the Cross, endured in behalf of those who are guilty of sin; and in the fore-threatened and fore-shadowed doom of the impenitent and unconverted, in the pains of hell forever. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

In view, then, of the immeasurable and inexpressible baseness and demerit of *all* sin, considered as *opposition to infinite holiness, goodness, truth, love, and majesty;* and in view of the deceiving power of sin in the heart where it dwells, it would seem safe for each man to act upon the *apprehension*, at least, that *his heart* and *his sins* may be as blind and as base as the heart and sins of any other man possess-

ing equal light and privileges. It is certain that no man, especially no impenitent and unconverted man, will ever over-estimate the corruption of his own heart or the guilt of his own transgressions against the infinitely holy God. And we have already seen that the disposition to plead even for a supposed "*little sin*" is the very height of offending.

Thus are we all, as sinners, *great or small*—and of this God is the only proper judge—*all* shut up to the solemn and immediate obligation of repentance and conversion. To this solemn and immediate duty, interest, and *privilege*, it is the design of this discourse to persuade the impenitent and unconverted. Repentance or perdition are the alternatives in your case. "Except ye repent," said the faithful, loving Jesus, to a promiscuous assembly of sinners, "ye shall all likewise perish."

Casting aside all idle speculations, it is not difficult for candid minds to understand the nature of true repentance and conversion. The Holy Scriptures reveal the *character* and *will* of God—the *one* every way worthy of supreme reverence, adoration, and love; the *other* a sublimely and supremely excellent and authoritative rule of feeling and action, in every relation and path of life. They represent this world, with all its objects and interests, as the moral domain of Jehovah, where all the faculties of the souls and bodies of men may and ought to be employed in the grateful and obedient recognition and improvement of every gift of His bounty, and ordering of His Word and providence, to His honor and glory. THIS IS THE RIGHT WAY—the way of truth, integrity, and honor; of real happiness and peace for mankind. This way it was in which the race started its career in Eden. God smiled, and the human soul was glad. Love, gratitude, and cheerful duty, were the sweetest perfumes of paradise; and the unclouded morning of creation witnessed the offering of this holy incense from the hearts of creatures to their approving Creator. This way has been departed from by all the descendants of apostate Adam, begotten in his apostate likeness, and following in his apostate steps. The call to repentance and conversion is a call from GOD to *His creatures*, to *come back* to Him, to change their minds, their affections, and aims. It is a most righteous call for God to make. It is a most righteous and noble obligation for man, the sinner, to meet and respond to at once, without evasion or reserve.

In genuine repentance, the seed principle of opposition toward God, and indifference to his will and honor, is abjured, with virtuous shame and sorrow. There is baseness, disgrace, and peril, in sin, and the repentant heart realizes and confesses it. God's order of things in his moral government is right, useful, and tends to His glory and the good of His creatures, and the repentant heart assents to and rejoices in it. The way of apostacy from God is the way of the arch tempter, and of all bad men; the way of vice and all crime; the way of delusion and folly now, and of hopeless ruin and remorse beyond the unknown limits of divine forbearance.

The *repenting* and *converting* soul—moved thereto by just views of spiritual and eternal things, as urged upon it by the Word and Spirit of God—trusting in the graciously-proffered remission of sins through the blood of Christ, and the promised aids of Divine grace to persevere in the right way, *comes back to God*, saying, Forgive me! Uphold me! Guide me! Save me!

Blessed change! Blessed is the soul that experiences it! It is a change from darkness to light—from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Moral order takes the place of impious disorder in the heart. Satan is dethroned, and God is enthroned in His proper place.

All who love God and truth, and who take pleasure in man's highest interests—his only true happiness—rejoice over this change; the good on earth and the good in heaven are glad; "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

The philanthropy of heaven and earth is in deep and holy sympathy with this triumph of truth and grace in the penitent's soul, and the echoing refrain swells upward, and downward, and onward—

"O how divine, how sweet the joy,
When but one sinner turns,
And with an humble, broken heart,
His sins and errors mourns!

"Pleased with the news, the saints below
In songs their tongues employ;
Beyond the skies the tidings go,
And heaven is filled with joy.

"Well pleased, the Father sees and hears
The conscious sinner's moan;
Jesus receives him in His arms,
And claims him for His own.

"Nor angels can their joys contain,
But kindle with new fire:
'The sinner lost is found,' they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre."

Repentance and conversion is no abstract, cold, difficult dogma of religion, but a thing of plain and practical sense, and of vital interest and experience. Some sinners—yea, a great multitude—have experienced this change, and are examples and witnesses for it, in heaven, and also now upon the earth. This experience is the line of demarcation between all that is pure and ennobling and all that is impure and corrupting among mankind.

Why, O sinner, with these motives and calls from the revelations of God, urged upon you by the blessed Spirit, why should not *you* REPENT AND TURN TO GOD? The delusion of sin has led you, it may be, far, far away from the way of purity and peace. That delusion, strong as it is now, grows stronger by delay. If ever saved, you must repent. Continued impenitency is itself a growing vice in the heart, and crime in the life. It is *utterly indefensible;* if persisted in, it must grieve and tend to quench the Spirit of God from your heart. It keeps you on the side of sin and guilt in this world, thus giving all the force of your example to public irreligion. It may quite possibly be said of some of you, in view of your respective positions in the family and in society, as the Saviour said to some in His day, "Ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Turn, then. Oh, turn now to God in Christ, from the world's delusive snares, renouncing all for God, and submitting all to God, as your soul's proper sovereign and choice.

If it were a matter of uncertain propriety to which you are urged, you might hesitate; but this change is divinely appropriate.

If it were a question of abstract speculation, you might content yourself with neutrality; but, so far from this, it is your personal, immediate, chief concern.

Declining or deferring immediate repentance and conversion, is it not obvious that you give moral preference to that which is evil, over that which is good? and do you not virtually say to God your Maker and Christ your Saviour, "Depart from me, and follow me no more with Divine counsels and merciful proposals?" Do you not virtually say to the Holy Spirit, "Depart from me, and leave my conscience to

slumber in sin, my heart to harden in impiety, and my soul under the present displeasure and the suspended, avenging wrath of a holy God?"

Will you not, *now*, be won to repentance and conversion—NOW?

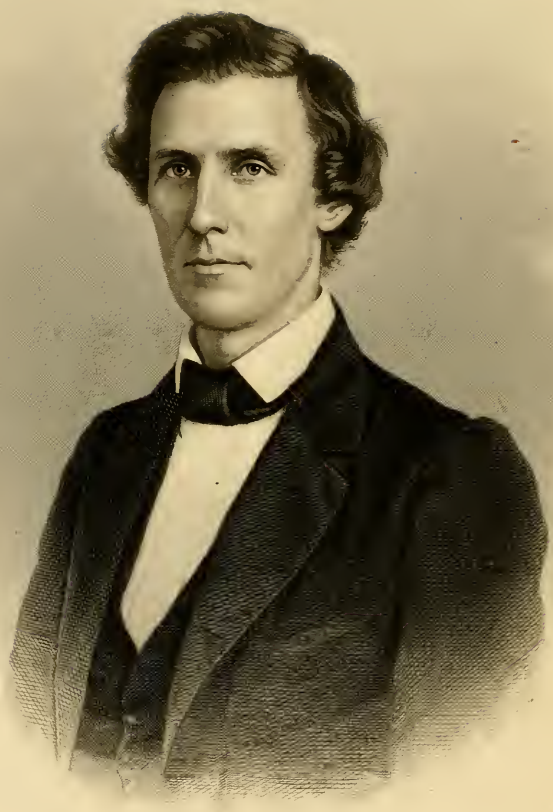
"Behold the SAVIOUR at *thy door!*
He gently knocks—has knocked before;
Has waited long—is waiting still;
You treat no other *Friend* so ill.

"Oh, lovely attitude! He stands
With melting heart and outstretched hands!
O matchless kindness! And He shows
This matchless kindness to His foes.

"Admit Him; for the human breast
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest;
Admit Him, or the hour's at hand
When at His bar denied you'll stand."

Let it be your grateful and glad response—

"Open my heart, Lord; enter in;
Slay every foe, and conquer sin.
I now to Thee my all resign;
My body, soul, and all, are Thine."



J. N. Cuthbert

THE PROPHET AND THE KING; OR, A MESSAGE FROM GOD.

BY REV. J. H. CUTHBERT,

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Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.—*Isaiah*, xxxviii, 1.

It was one of the greatest of the prophets who was sent with that message to one of the greatest of the kings of Judah. The humblest ambassador of Christ may bring it with equal authority to every reader of these pages; for while the force and universality of its bearing is at once apparent, whether it be prophet, apostle, or the most ordinary servant of Christ, who delivers it, that which gives it all its weight and emphasis—"*thus saith the Lord*"—is the same with each and with all.

The prophet warns the king that he must die, and not live.

The inevitableness of death is strikingly set forth in this varied form of expression, "*Thou shalt die, and not live.*" With but two exceptions—Enoch, who was translated, that he should not see death, and Elijah, who was caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire—that sentence has laid its arrest on all the millions of the human family. "*So death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" Whatever may be the fact of death having existed in this world apart from the cause and antecedent of human transgression, in the history of the pre-Adamite earth, where the records of strife, agony, and death, are written all over the rocky tablets beneath; the Bible, which is no text-book of geology, but a history of man in his relation to God, distinctly ascribes the visitation of death upon the human family to the entrance and commission of sin. It stands a perpetual sign and monument, through all generations, of God's displeasure against sin—a sentence as universal as it is inevitable. Some are

snatched away in the first dawn of life; others are struck down in the prime of manhood, or in the blush of womanhood; others, again, are summoned away, stooping under the weight and infirmity of years. Some pine away under the slow approaches of disease; some are hurried off by the sudden casualties with which the annals of every-day life are crowded; while multitudes, like the leaves of autumn scattered before the wind, are swept away by the blast of the pestilence, or, like the blades of grass under the reaper's hand, are mowed down in the red carnage of the battle-field. But for each and all, it is the inevitable doom—the universal appointment.

Besides this universal and inevitable character of death, that which invests it with still more seriousness and importance is the true meaning of the event itself. Looking at death simply in the light of nature, as the point of departure from time—the passage in man's history where he pauses to look, for the last time, on the scenes and associations of this world—it is a critical period. But when we view this change in the light of Revelation, it becomes an event a thousand times more critical and eventful. It is no longer the shadowy and uncertain region where the great thinkers before Christ, Socrates and Plato, tried in vain to penetrate, as the navigators before Columbus could see across the Atlantic nothing but an abyss of waters. Nor is it the land of oblivion and eternal sleep into which the French infidels thought they could convert it by a decree of the Convention.

Jesus Christ has crossed the waters, and discovered the new world on the other side. Jesus Christ has descended into those silent and shadowy regions, and brought life and immortality to light. With the chart of the Bible before us, death is discovered as a landmark which points to the future, as well as to the past—the act and mode of entrance into the eternal world. The essential difference between the soul and the body is shown, so that the loss and disappearance of the one in the grave does not affect the continued life and consciousness of the other. For the body to "return to the dust" is for the spirit to "return to God who gave it;" while according to its moral and spiritual fitness or unfitness for that Holy Presence, will be its place and destiny in the invisible world. These are the clear and unmistakable revelations of that Word which all the principles of sound criticism and historic faith compel us to receive as the Word of the true and living God. To die, according to this testimony, is to

pass at once into the presence of our Maker and Judge. It is to have all those tremendous revelations of the Bible, which now seem so distant and so shadowy, converted into objects of intense and immediate consciousness. For the believer in the one Saviour, the one great salvation, it is to enter into rest—it is to be "present with his Lord." For the despiser of that Saviour, the neglecter of that great salvation, it is to pass away to no intermediate place, no purgatorial fires, but to go with Judas to "his own place"—to be cast, with the unprofitable servant, into "outer darkness," where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." To all intents and purposes, then, the hour of death is the day of judgment for every man. Whatever additional solemnity the more public transactions of the last day may give to the decisions of that judgment, if the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that those decisions are virtually made and enforced in the hour of death. Then for each and all, as death ushers them separately and yet unceasingly into that interview with God, the trumpet sounds, the great white throne is erected, and the sentence goes forth which meets the spirit to bless and save, or to overwhelm and destroy it forever.

Now, while to most, if not all, of those who may glance over these lines, these reflections are among the admitted articles of their belief, the singular fact here meets us, that of all events and occurrences in this world, not one is so little regarded or anticipated as this great hour of crisis and doom, which strikes for every man in death. Everywhere else, in all that relates to this world, men will act with forethought and sagacity. Every step of the way will be accurately surveyed—all their plans and speculations arranged with the utmost system and punctuality—not a domestic comfort, not a pecuniary interest, not a dollar, not a cent, overlooked. But as soon as death rises up and claims their consideration—this most momentous of all events in their history—at once, and for the first time, a strange lethargy seizes upon the soul, all its energies are paralyzed, and the whole subject is entertained with impatience, if not speedily and entirely dismissed. Every man's conscience will testify to the fact. Under all the circumstances, it is an indifference so strange, so contrary to those laws and principles which usually govern the human mind, that there is but one explanation of it. The Word of God supplies that explanation. Man, awake everywhere else, is asleep here; seeing everywhere else, is blind here; living with all the en-

ergies and sensibilities of his nature for this world, is dead, in all the best feelings and powers of his soul, to the world to come.

What Foster says of conscience, rising up and rebuking the passions of the heart, may be said of this thought of death, as it flashes across the chambers of the soul; it comes and stands, as some stern and unwelcome intruder among a company of gay revellers. Men who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God cannot be comfortable with either the rebuke of conscience or the thought of death. Accordingly, they turn away from both. They are ingenious and unremitting in their efforts to devise methods to silence the reproaches of the one, and to drown the very thought of the other. As the cuttle-fish hides itself from its pursuer in the dark fluid with which it discolors the surrounding water, so the soul, under the cloud and cover of its vain speculations, seeks to evade the pursuit of conscience, and the very thought of that calamity which impends over it in death. Turning to the cares of life, the anxieties and engrossments of business, men imagine that they find in these temporal things which God commands, a plea for indifference in those eternal things where God equally commands; and while the prophet warns, or the apostle reasons, they deem it a sufficient answer to each and every monitor, "Go thy way for this time; when we have a convenient season, we will call for thee." Or else, plunging into the whirl of fashionable life, and drinking deep at the fountains of forbidden pleasure, they are soothed by the songs of the enchantress, and lulled into the oblivious slumbers of spiritual death, until the voice of conscience is drowned, the alarms of death are silenced, the very power of reflection is paralyzed, while their language, incoherent and murmuring under the delirium of sin, is that of the dying Mirabeau—the language of a heart where the profligacy and chilling materialism of his age had crushed out every higher thought and holier aspiration—"Crown me with flowers, sprinkle me with perfumes, that I may enter upon eternal sleep."

The prophet warns the king to set his house in order.

In these warnings of the Old Testament, the truth of a future life is strikingly exhibited. The immortality of the soul, the future and endless destiny of man, has been "brought to light"—clearly revealed in the New Testament. All must live, whatever be the meaning of that life; all must rise again, whatever be the character of that resurrection. But underlying all these passages in the Old

Testament—passages where the notes of warning and preparation are so distinctly sounded—the same truth may be discovered. The argument is indirect, but, on that very account, more striking. For why, it may be asked, warn us to "set our house in order," or prepare at all for death, if there is to be no judgment after it—no existence beyond the grave, where that judgment is to be realized. If death is an eternal sleep, where our being and the responsibility attached to it is to be buried forever, then let our house be in disorder, let us sleep on in worldliness, unbelief, and sin. We can smile at all the warnings of all the prophets in the world; we can despise the threatenings of the Almighty himself. Instead of setting our house in order, and stirring ourselves to prepare for death, we can afford to banish the whole subject from our minds, while we say, each to himself and to his neighbor, "Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry;" "to-morrow we die."

We may discover, then, from these very warnings, so constantly sounded in the Old Testament, as well as from the clearer revelations of the New, the great truth of life and immortality as the appointed destiny of man.

Side by side, however, with this truth of a future life, stands another, which gives it additional seriousness and importance. Man is immortal; but man, as he is, has no assurance that that immortality will be for him a state of happiness, or even of safety. The truth is, the king's house is in disorder, and in no state to meet the scrutiny of Him who comes to search Jerusalem with candles. Men talk of their innocence, and boast of their deportment before the world. But, after all, this is but an evasion of the question, which is not as to any appearance before men, but as to the true state of the heart before God. This vague statement of the case is a style of pleasing rhetoric and accommodating logic, which may do very well in hours of frivolity; but let that illusion, in which we love to wrap ourselves, be dispelled by the touch of some serious calamity, and these complacent thoughts and proud imaginations are broken up as the mists of morning are scattered under the touch of the solar rays.

The very thought of death, though the event itself may be at a distance, is full of terror to the human heart. This, in one sense, may be regarded as a wise safeguard which has been implanted by God for the preservation of life. But where life has lost all its

charm and attractiveness, that terror and misgiving is still associated with death. Another element, then, must enter into that fear of death, which seems to lie at the very foundation of our nature. And what is this but that deep and ineradicable conviction of sin which every human being carries in his bosom—the consciousness of guilt, and consequent unfitness for the presence of the holy and omniscient Judge.

And if the simple thought of death, and the misgiving that thought occasions, reveals this fact, we are not surprised that actual contact with the event itself invariably confirms these impressions. As death approaches, how complete the change which begins to take place in all our views and feelings! Those sins which we had passed over so lightly are at once invested with alarming magnitude. That view of the Supreme Being which could overlook His holiness and justice, and, by the imputation of a blind and indiscriminate mercy, reduce Him to the level of human weakness, and make Him "altogether such an one as ourselves," gives place to some just conception of His character as the moral Governor of the Universe. That oversight of Christ, the most wonderful being that ever challenged the attention of the world—an oversight in which we could persist with such singular deliberation and complacency—rises up, and is seen, perhaps, for the first time, in the light in which it is discovered in the Gospel, as the neglect of the one Saviour, and the one great salvation. Those excuses we could once urge with so much confidence and composure, while we attempted to justify our indifference to religion, and our devotion to the world—excuses drawn from a thousand sources—from the difficulties of Providence, as if these difficulties did not constitute the great trial of life for all—from the inconsistencies of professed Christians, as if these sins of others could possibly affect the question of personal duty—from the mysteries connected with the Divine Being and government, as if, with our limited vision, we could scan and measure those mighty and complicated wheels that sweep through the universe in the vastness of their dimensions, and embrace eternity in the grandeur of their movements—as if the challenge of Jehovah to Job were not a sufficient answer to all objections which our ignorance and littleness may suggest—"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding"—these sophistries with which we could once beguile ourselves, while we declined the consideration

of religion and its claims—extenuations of our guilt, which, in the blindness of self-love, we invested with such importance—all begin to fade and vanish in the light of eternity, as the dreams which amused or troubled the sleeper are broken up and scattered when the morning dawns upon his slumbers. The experiences of some may seem to be at variance with this account; but unless the poison of infidelity and a long familiarity with sin have eaten away every moral sense and instinct of the soul, the approach of death will invariably suggest these views and awaken these apprehensions.

Our house "*in order!*" We, with the evil of sin unremedied in our nature, ready to go forth and meet the scrutiny of the omniscient Judge! ready to confront that God whose law we have broken, that Saviour whose love we have despised! ready to have the record of our whole life unfolded, and to challange the sentence of the righteous and impartial Judge! No! with all the illusions of which the human heart is capable, it can scarcely be betrayed into one so monstrous as this. Our house is all in disorder and confusion. The chambers of imagery within are crowded with tumultuous passions, which cannot bear the inspection of the Omniscient Eye. The hardness of the heart, the frivolity of the life, the eagerness and zest with which multitudes are rushing into scenes so fatal to every principle of piety, all testify to the moral and spiritual ruin into which sin has plunged our nature, the total unfitness of man for the inevitable and tremendous ordeal of the coming judgment. Sin has involved the whole race in a controversy with God—sin, so fearful in its curse, and so far-reaching in its results, that Isaac Taylor has well said of it, "If there were no other argument for a future life, sin would furnish one never to be refuted; for it tells of a cause standing over between the Judge and ourselves, for the hearing and decision of which, a time must certainly come."

The king's house is in disorder. But as the warning of the prophet rings through his chamber, he turns his pale face to the wall, and in prayer and penitence begins to set his house in order. With the mention and exposure of the evil, let us then suggest the remedy for this disorder, which we believe God has mercifully provided.

Side by side with the great "mystery of iniquity" stands the great mystery of redemption—these two equally incomprehensible mysteries in the history of this world.

When the judgments of God were upon the land of Egypt, the

destroying angel, on that memorable night, entered every house and slew the first-born of every family in the land. More dreadful than that destroying angel, sin has entered the inmost life and home of every soul, and left the mark and the curse of his presence on every individual of the great family of man. According to the Divine appointment, there was but one refuge from the sword of the destroying angel—it was the blood which God commanded Moses to sprinkle on the door posts of the Israelites. By the same appointment, there is but one refuge from the curse and condemnation of sin, the sprinkling upon the guilty soul of that blood which was typified by the blood on the door posts of the Israelites—"the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin." Christ and the mystery of His Cross, as revealed in the Gospel, is the only object in this world at the presence of which the dark and disordered house of the human heart can be restored to order and peace. The plan may be thus explained. Among all the crowded habitations of men, His was the only house which the judgment of God ever pronounced as perfectly in order; among all the millions of the human family, He was the only Being who, at the close of a pure and sinless life, could say, "Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth." In the glory of this work and the completeness of this sacrifice, He is set forth in the Gospel as the one great object of hope. By the merciful appointment of God, He is proposed and accepted as the substitute of all who will accept Him in this relation. In the act of looking to that Cross, and believing on that Saviour, the guilty and the lost are identified with Him in all the transactions of the Divine justice. He becomes the Lord, their righteousness.

The warning of the prophet, then, to the king, "Set thine house in order," is equivalent to the call of the apostle to every lost and guilty creature upon earth, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The house of every soul that looks to Him in faith, He will set in such order by the glory of His presence, that the scrutiny of the last judgment itself will find nothing to condemn. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." The sentence may still go forth, "Thou shalt die, and not live." But for the believer, He has divested that sentence of all its gloom and terror. He, the Lord of life Himself, was "once

dead, and is now alive for evermore;" and side by side with the sentence of death against us, is the sentence of life in Him. "Thou shalt die, and not live," is written against us; but the assurance is equally clear and unmistakable, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." During a season of severe illness, Mr. Cecil once wrote these words: "When He said to me, by my physicians, 'Thou shalt die, and not live,' and especially when one of them told me this with tears, my soul, like a man suddenly overwhelmed by an inundation, looked around to examine the ground on which it stood to meet the unexpected trial. The ground was found to be such as could secure me from any flood, and I was enabled to reply, My friend, you do not alarm me. 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day.'" This fragment was written in the year 1799. The passage it quotes as the ground of consolation was written about the middle of the first century. But in all ages, and among all generations of men, the faith embodied in that great sentence has constituted the one immovable foundation on which innumerable souls, swept away in wreck and ruin by the floods of sin that have inundated the whole world, have been built up again in perfect order and imperishable strength.

Nor is this all—this initiatory act and exercise of faith. Besides that first movement which unites the soul to Christ, there is a subsequent movement, a constant, habitual preparation, which we cannot overlook—a work necessarily growing out of and connected with all true faith. It is the setting of the house in order, not once, but day by day, to the end of life. Hezekiah, when the prophet came to him, had been a man of faith and prayer for many years—one of the most pious of all the kings of Judah. But his work is not done. God stretches out His hand against him, and smites him with a malady which, in its nature, is mortal. The king turns his face to the wall, and pours out his soul in an agony of tears. He prays as men pray when they feel the hand of God upon them. And lo! the sentence, always, it would seem, suspended on the exercise of penitence and prayer, is arrested, and fifteen years more of hope and promise are added to the king's life. As a sign from heaven that the promise shall not fail, one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Bible is wrought, and He who made the stars to "fight against Sisera," com-

mands the sun to smile upon Hezekiah, and the shadow turns back again ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz. He is saved. But alas for the vanity and weakness of human nature in its best state. Even after that stern lesson of illness and miraculous deliverance, we find the record, "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up—lifted up with pride." Again the Almighty touches him—"there was wrath upon him, and upon Jerusalem." Once more he turns his face to the wall; the child is subdued at the reproof of his father—"Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart."

What child of God, or believer in Jesus, does not recognise himself in this portrait hung up in the picture gallery of the Old Testament. A complication of events in the providence of God, merciful and mysterious, hedge up his path, and drive him to the Cross. He beholds, and lives. A new life fills his soul; a new hope brightens on his path. But it is the life of faith in its germ; the first breathings of hope in its chrysalis form, fair and promising, but still fettered by a "body of sin and death." How many struggles are still necessary, before that body of sin and death is thrown aside, before the thick and interlacing branches of worldliness are broken off, and the new creature in Christ Jesus, like the joyous insect soaring away from the withered branch or twig where it was bound, moves and exults in all its free and unrestrained energies, in the light and splendor of the heavenly world. Alternate light and darkness, joy and sorrow, health and sickness—these are the shifting scenes of that path where the Father in heaven leads His child upon earth—that path so bright, at times, that it seems to touch the very borders of Immanuel's land; and then so dark and cheerless, that the trembling child can only grasp his Father's hand, and whisper, "He knoweth the way that I take." But through all these alternations and vicissitudes, it is a gradual though irregular progress, a setting of the house more and more in order, "the path of the just like the shining light, shining more and more to the perfect day." If it is first of all, "through belief of the truth," that our house is set in order, it is always afterwards "through sanctification of the spirit" that that house is prepared for the coming of the Master, furnished and adorned as the dwelling place of the Spirit of holiness.

A German writer has remarked that God accounts nothing righteous which is not so in reality. If he means that whenever God ac-

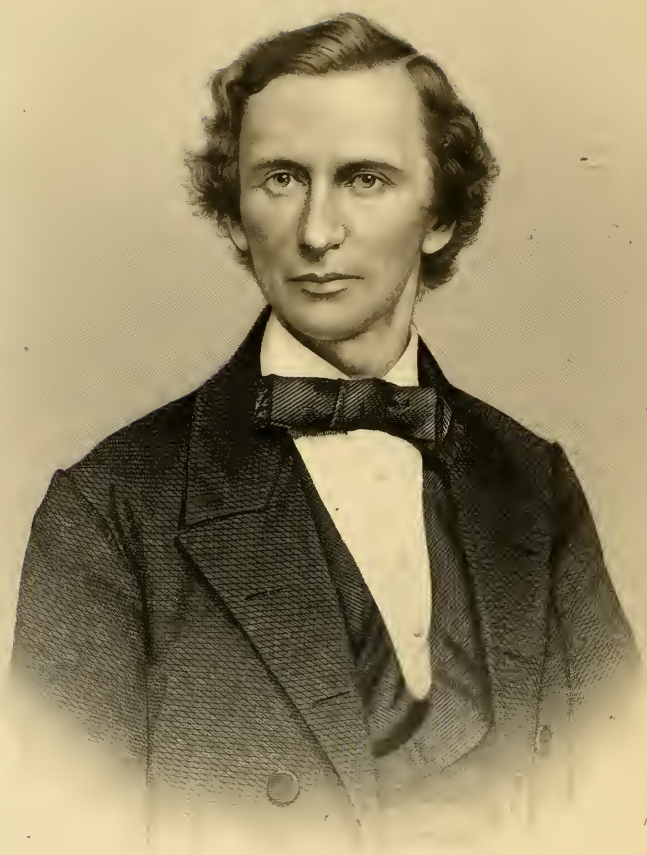
counts the sinner righteous by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, He makes him truly and personally righteous by the influences of the Spirit, this is a great and invariable truth—the law of the progress and perfection of the Divine life in the human soul. The work of yesterday will not answer for to-day, nor the work of to-day for to-morrow. Each successive day and year, as they bring, in their onward march, new trials and sterner experiences, demand, as the condition of our safety, constant effort and increasing vigilance to the end. "This one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The Christian is a soldier, and, with his armor on, he may be ready for the battle; but if he falls asleep at his post, or on the field, a child may disarm him. The believer is a pilgrim, and with his face turned to the shining city, "that city whose builder and whose maker is God," he is in the way of life; but if he turns aside to the enchanted grounds of forbidden pleasure, he may touch the very borders of Immanuel's land, and still not enter. The child of God is a sentinel placed on duty upon the plains of life, and watching in the darkness and silence of the night for the coming of the Master; but if he suffers himself to be overtaken by the dalliance of sin, or lulled asleep on the open plain by the songs of the enchantress, that cry may at last burst upon him in a dreadful and unexpected hour, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." There is peace, it is true, for the believer, even here, in anticipation of heaven. But as the albatross rests on the bosom of the wave, or was supposed, in the superstitions of the mariner, to sleep even on the wing, so with the child of God, in the region of the new life, the congenial element where the principles of faith and hope expand their wings and take their delightful excursions, he reposes amid all the storms that surround him, and finds in the very act of putting forth his energies in the service of his God, that peace which passeth all understanding.

Let me then whisper one parting word of warning, as we take leave of the prophet and the king. "Awake, O sleeper!" "Set thine house in order!"

To him whose eye, in the providence of God, may be directed to these pages, I would say, This is a message from God to you. "It is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." Let the trav-

eller, lost in some trackless wilderness, smile at his peril. Let the shipwrecked mariner, drifting far out on a stormy sea, laugh at the winds and the waves. Let the criminal on his way to the scaffold indulge, if he will, in levity. But, O impenitent man, unregenerate woman, lover of pleasure more than lover of God, make not light of that evil of sin which possesses thy soul—that "wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"—that wrath already darkening the horizon with the storm of the coming judgment. Are you turning away from the warning of the prophet because the bloom of youth is mantling your cheek, and the life-blood of youth is bounding in your veins? the arrow which is to wither that bloom, and smite all that strength and beauty to the grave, is already cleaving the air. Are you closing these pages, as you have closed ten thousand before, because you have not yet been brought, like Hezekiah, to the chamber of sickness and death—because the future seems full of opportunity and radiant with promise? The hope is as false as hell, as cruel as the grave. When that chamber shall be once entered, your spirit, in crossing that threshold, may have crossed the last boundary and terminus of hope. Amid the wild distractions and crowding anxieties of that tremendous hour, with a heart trembling in suspense, and a body shivering in the pangs of dissolution, you may discover that in the dealing of a dreadful though righteous retribution, the sweet visions of hope and heaven have faded forever, and that "hell is truth seen too late."

"Set thine house in order." King, prophet, minister, member of the church, man of the world—the sentence has gone forth against thee, "Thou shalt die, and not live."



Henry Bascom Ridgaway

OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.

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Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.—1 *Samuel*, xv, 22.

In no respect does the Divine maxim, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," hold with greater force and certainty than in the history of nations. Retribution for outrages upon innocence and helplessness may slumber long, so long that the guilty perpetrators begin to think themselves secure; but awake it will, and its coming will only be the more summary and terrible for the delay. In the luxuriant valleys of Brazil, a ripe berry will fall into the rich mud, begin to sprout while the observer yet lingers on the spot, and in a few days shoot up into a great plant; while on the bleak plains of the frigid zone, weary months and years are necessary to bring the tiny seed to maturity and productiveness. Thus it is in the spiritual world. Some sins bring speedy destruction; on others, the avenging step follows slowly, and not unfrequently generations are buried and ages roll away before Divine vengeance overtakes transgression.

This truth is strikingly illustrated in the history of the Amalekites. They had fought against the children of Israel in the wilderness, had cowardly fallen upon their rear, and smitten all that were feeble, faint, and weary. For this conduct, and because they feared not God, the judgment of utter extirpation was pronounced against them. "Therefore, it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." (*Deut.*, xxv, 19.) At the time from which the text dates, Israel was settled in the land of promise, had asked and obtained a king. Saul by his personal valor had inspired the tribes with confidence and loyalty; and to him God

now sends, at the hands of Samuel, the command, to execute the long-impending sentence against the "sinners, the Amalekites." "Now, go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." "And Saul smote the Amalekites." His obedience, however, was not perfect; he did not wholly fulfil the Divine direction. For this God was wroth, and sent Samuel to rebuke him. "And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him"—for hypocrisy is ever bold in its professions—"Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord." But sin will have a tongue, though it be the braying of an ass or the bleating of a sheep. "And Samuel said, What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" There are two ways in which sinners commonly try to excuse their guilt. They either endeavor to shift its responsibility upon others, or plead for it a religious motive, or they do both. Saul had spared Agag the king, also the best of the sheep and the oxen; but he avowed it was at the clamor of the people, and to offer in sacrifice to God. Samuel retorts upon him, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

The text in its historical connections suggests the following theme: THAT OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW IS SUPERIOR TO DISOBEDIENCE, EVEN WHEN ATTENDED BY SACRIFICES TO HIS CAUSE.

The *first* leading thought offered in support of this proposition is, If God should sanction or allow disobedience to His law for any cause whatever, it would finally subvert His Kingdom altogether in the earth.

It is an axiom in physics, that no two bodies can occupy the same place at the same time. Every spiritual existence fills some sphere. And it may be equally said that no two spirits precisely alike can occupy the same position at one instant. Herein may be seen an argument for the unity of God. There can be but one infinity—all true and pure ideas of Godhead demand that He be infinite. It is impossible to conceive of two unlimited beings filling one unlimited space, and hence there can be but one Infinite Being. The authority of this one God must be equally prevalent with Himself, uni-

versal. The assertion and maintenance of another rule, which must ensue if God allow disobedience to His own government—because disobedience to it is only obedience to another—would be to set up two universal and supreme dominions, which would be impossible. One must destroy the other. This is a fundamental principle in civil government, as is illustrated in our own country. The laws of the United States are supreme in all the States and Territories. Hence any municipal law of a State or Territory which conflicts with them is not binding, and falls to the ground from its very illegality. Should the States of this Union pass laws to regulate the currency, to declare war, and enforce them, it would be insurrection, and cause finally an utter subversion of the General Government. "A house divided or a nation divided against itself cannot stand." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Consequently, if God be not obeyed by His creatures, some other power will be enthroned in the universe, and His rule practically destroyed.

Moreover, a law is a law only so far as it is sustained. The enactment of a statute by the law-makers gives the form, not the force of law. If the statute passed and published do not flow from the heart of the people, and be not sustained by public sentiment, it soon becomes a dead letter in the archives of the courts. You will find in the records of every State laws entirely obsolete, because long disregarded, and to attempt now to enforce them would madden to rebellion. Therefore we see the folly of legislating in advance of public opinion. This should be first created and educated, and then the laws passed would have a sufficient guaranty for their support. Then I submit, What is to become of the laws of God, those pure emanations of Divine wisdom and goodness, enacted and promulgated to preserve the order of the universe, if they are to be habitually trampled upon with impunity? Surely violation, unreproved, would superinduce contempt, and contempt, in its turn, recklessness, and the ordinances of Heaven would virtually cease to be laws.

Let it be also remembered, that if the Almighty should allow disobedience for any object whatever, it would defeat the end of His moral government, the promotion of virtue and religion, upon the existence of which its stability depends. Let it be once authoritatively understood among men that sin can be freely indulged, and yet the Divine favor secured by sacrifice, and there will be an end to virtue. Human nature will never endure the rigid habits of un-

swerving integrity in the relations of life, if all the rewards of such a life can be as certainly obtained by a loose disregard and contempt of those relations. The ungodly can well afford to bring to God's altar their occasional offerings of money, talents, or services, if they can receive from the Divine hand sanction for their illegal gains and unholy lusts. Let me pursue my desire for wealth, have license to get gold—by right if I can; if not, by wrong; by steeling my heart to the calls of mercy, the claims of humanity, trampling under foot every attribute of justice and truth, and chiselling between the flesh and bones of unfortunate men, helpless women and children, for gain—and surely I would prove myself destitute of the first qualifications for success, if I could not afford occasionally to replenish the poor fund, or even the missionary treasury. Burning with worldly ambition, let me understand from Heaven that I may seek honor by the legitimate influences of reason and truth if I can succeed; if not, by force and fraud, by blood and double-dealing—then I would show myself poorly versed in modern state-craft, if I could not readily consent on great anniversaries to allude in vague terms to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, or even go so far as to make a polite bow to Jesus of Nazareth, or order a Te Deum, or celebrate a public fast. A devotee of pleasure, my heart a nest of all uncleanness, I might well be bold to draw the sword against the church's foes, and peril limb and life, fame and fortune, for her safety and honor, if for all other times and seasons I could have her permission and pardon for my libidinous intrigues, my habitual unblushing violations of innocence and virtue; or in hoary age be ready, with feeble tottering steps, when the fires of the soul have spent themselves in whirling consuming lusts, and the man once so proud and beautiful in his fleshly glory, has naught left but the dry, blackened crust of a former self, to creep to the stately altar, and vainly strive to appease an insulted God by the parade of a penitence which grieves not that it has sinned, but that it can no longer sin.

> "In every street,
> The brave streams of the proud and gaudy world
> Flow to the house of God,"

may be a satire too severe, but it has its fearful pointing. Multitudes delude themselves that they can live irregularly, divorce business and religion, throw the reins upon the neck of passion and spur on to the freest indulgence, and on the Sabbath go to the house of God,

and wipe away the sins of the week by repeating a prayer, singing a psalm, or praising the preacher.

Vain man, foolish and blind! What is your gold to God? "Will He esteem thy riches? No, not gold nor all the forces of strength." What your learning and services to Him who has angels for His ministers? He by a single word could people the earth with myriad forms of strength and beauty, and, breathing into them the living spark of intelligence and sensibility, could employ them all to fulfil His Word. Think not "to walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thine eyes," and afterward to corrupt judgment by the plea of heroic sufferings! To use your mental and social powers solely to gain the praise of men, and then to escape that most crushing of all curses—the penalty which awaits abused talents—by recognising with patronizing air the precepts of the Bible in a fugitive essay, or deferentially referring to the worth of religion to the poor and the criminal in the court room or the Senate chamber! To amass money, to add house to house, acre to acre, ship to ship, to crowd your safes with bonds and mortgages, to get all you can and keep all you get through a long life, despite the appeals of poverty and ignorance, and then, when death comes and strikes all from your avaricious grasp, to buy off the accusing witnesses, Mercy and Justice, and purchase a valid title to heaven by founding a hospital or endowing a college! To encourage such a hope would be a libel on the Gospel, a mockery to you. It is your heart, your love, that God asks; your obedience, and not your sacrifices. He made the stars, and said, shine, and they shone—the birds, and said, sing, and they sung. Your will He cannot compel. The submission of this will is the only service He can accept. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (*Mic.*, vi, 7, 8.) And yet are there not teachers, claiming a Divine commission, who boldly proclaim, Give us your money and your conscience, and we will square your sins with Heaven? Indeed, is there not a deeply-seated popular belief, not defended to be sure, but covertly felt and cherished, that God will be bribed at last by some act of devotion or beneficence which man himself can perform?

Furthermore, such is the infectious nature of disobedience, that if countenanced at all, it must spread with fearful rapidity. Obedience is difficult, and reluctantly imitated. Disobedience is easy, and readily imitated. In the natural heart there is a strong bias to sin, a restiveness under restraint, an inherent proclivity to mischief, which like a train of powder needs only the spark of vicious example, to cause the explosion of corrupt passions into open, defiant rebellion against all authority. If there be such positive and rapid communication between material substances, such as light, electricity, and heat, notwithstanding the grossness of matter, what may we not expect between spirit and spirit, where the nature is so ethereal, the organism so exquisite and subtle! Swifter than the beams of morning, and passing the speed of angel's wing, is the transmission of thought, thought impelled by fiery passion. Incalculable is the force of embodied conception and feeling over the hearts of men. Truly, the mind is a chamber hung with pictures painted by the brush of sympathy from the scenes of associated life. But alas! for the pictures, the originals are too often the habitations of cruelty, the region and shadow of death, where the light and love which gleam and flash above and below serve only to disclose the darkness and death. Not more quickly does fire run through stubble, mutiny spread on shipboard, or insurrection in an army, where the spirit of faction and disorder is not decisively met and crushed, than would universal anarchy ensue in the moral world, were God to tolerate for a moment, and for any object whatever, disloyalty to His supremacy. "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." "Thou hast magnified it above all Thy name." "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

The *second* general argument for the superiority of obedience is found in the excellent fruits or graces which it instrumentally originates and nourishes.

Need it be said that faith without works is dead? There can be no real confidence in the Divine mercy, where there is not sincere obedience to the Divine law. "Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" has a profound psychological as well as theological order. He who knew what is in man, understood perfectly that man neither would nor could trust another to save him from a condition with which he felt fully satisfied; and that trust in another and higher power for salvation was not possible, until, in

addition to a thorough dissatisfaction with self, an all-pervading conviction fills the heart, "I have done all I could to save myself." God never does for us what we can do for ourselves. Divine interposition begins where human strength ceases. Not to destroy man by ignoring his personality, but to save him by reaching forth a helping hand to fallen though glorious powers, is the cardinal idea of the Gospel. And it is not until the penitent feels that he has done all in his power to deliver himself from sin, that he will trust God to do for him what experience has taught he cannot do for himself.

This truth obtains equally in the experience of every Christian. If he have not pure love to God and to his neighbor, there can be no abiding faith. Unless he be conscious of integrity, of a sincere, earnest, and habitual effort to do God's holy will, he cannot come to Him with confidence either for his own personal sanctification and comfort, or for the salvation of others. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. And whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight." (1 *John*, iii, 19, &c.) The cords of iniquity effectually bind the wings of faith. And the reason that the church is so cold in her devotions, and so little comparative success attends her evangelizing efforts, is, that her confidence in God's promises and methods is paralyzed by a self-accusing consciousness of delinquency. There cannot be an overcoming faith in the people of God, except the Spirit of Him who fulfilled all righteousness breathes and works in their hearts and lives.

With equal justness I may add, that humility can be successfully cultivated only by habitual obedience. There may be the appearance of true self-abasement in the man who, while his life is marred by gusts of anger, vindictiveness, and plottings for place, comes ever and anon, when glimpses of his folly flash suddenly upon him, before the people with tearful confession. But this does not imply that the heart is really humble. For no sooner is the pride stung or the imaginary rights invaded, than the same resentment shows itself. Ah, spasmodic grief and intensest haughtiness may coexist! Parallelism is often found in one point, between the straightest and the most crooked line; but run them out, and the disparity is soon seen. The proudest heart may in single instances harmonize with the rule,

"Let each esteem others better than himself;" but trace the two into all the possible contingencies of morals and religion, and you will discover the disagreement. Action tries the temper of a grace. It is not by periodic fits of sorrow that the heart is made lowly, but keeping it in daily contact with the bright, keen edge of the commandment.

Some think to grow humble by contemplating God's wisdom, goodness, and power, as displayed in creation. They "consider the heavens the work of his fingers, the moon and stars which he hath ordained, and ask, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" They dwell upon the magnitude and permanence of the universe, and, in contrast, the smallness and instability of man, write disparaging words of human life, and regard themselves humble. In poetic frenzy, they group the worst and saddest scenes of the world into pictures, brood over the most unamiable tendencies of human nature, and think, by such a process, to become humble. The value of meditation upon the Divine works and human follies cannot be doubted; but that humility can be wholly or chiefly cultivated by it, I totally deny. Philosophers and poets have written rapturously of the Divine Majesty, and painted in blackest shades and tenderest pathos the vileness and vanity of mankind, but have remained the veriest self-idolaters. He is not the humblest man who constantly berates himself, but who, from a just estimate of his own character, a thorough consciousness of his own power as changed and strengthened by grace, pursues a quiet, orderly, and useful life. No one so deeply feels the need of Divine help as he who is trying habitually to fulfil God's law. None so fully estimates and extols the Divine power and glory as he who can say, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, I am pure from the blood of all men." He indeed is the only man who can truly say, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle"—"less than the least of all saints." Behold! Jesus takes a little child up in His arms, and, in the presence of His disputing disciples, declares him to be the type of His Kingdom. And why? Because of his humility. He meant by this example to warn them against ambition, to teach them that the great practical lesson they would learn in following Him was lowliness. And so the sequel proved. I have sometimes thought, man begins the world a child in simplicity and guilelessness, and soon,

alas! exalts himself against God; but if he ever return to God by way of the Cross, and fulfil in his life the whole circle of the commandments, compress in his experience and practice their divinest, sweetest harmony, he ends where he began—a child, a very child for meekness.

Spiritual knowledge comes originally and is chiefly promoted by obedience. To acquire a certain and satisfactory insight to any system, we must follow in our inquiries such a method as its nature allows. It would be the height of folly to attempt to trace and measure the paths of the planets, by manipulating according to the rules of chemical affinities and repulsions; or to determine the delicate flow of thought, imagination, and wit, by disquisitions on the square and circle. Equally absurd is the effort—which many, in their presumption, have sought to make—to ascertain the things of the Spirit of God, the sublime mysteries of religion, by processes strictly human, appeals to facts belonging wholly to the sensible world. Would a man master the natural sciences, metaphysics, politics, or any one of the sciences subordinate to these, then he must pause at the threshold of each, and, acknowledging his ignorance, must first receive from each the key which unlocks the recesses within—otherwise, all attempts at entrance are vain—must meekly learn how each is to be interrogated, else all questionings will but return in the echoes of their own folly, and no progress whatever in sound knowledge will be made. And when any one of these has deigned to speak, he must receive thankfully any revelation of law or fact which is uttered, and, instead of complaining of either its scantiness or absurdity, must be content to proceed cautiously and slowly to perfection, and be satisfied if, after the lapse of long years of study and trial, he can say, "I am master."

As in the earthly sciences the Creator has indicated, in half-surface, half-buried features, the line of investigation by which they are to be successfully explored, so also in the heavenly He has revealed to us, by the conjoint teachings of his secret Spirit and open Word, the unerring way to Himself, to the knowledge of His spiritual kingdom. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" said the marvelling Jews. Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (*John*, vii, 16, 17.) Christ claimed to be of God.

Nay, said the Jews, we are of God; we have the commandments; we received the law by Moses. Allow that ye have the law and the prophets; ye know them not, neither do them, else ye would discern My origin, person, character, works, doctrine, as foretold in them—in learning and doing the will of God as revealed in them, ye would assuredly come to know My doctrine to be divine, and that I am the Christ of God, whom now ye so ignorantly and culpably deny. Here, then, is the clue to spiritual knowledge. The heart and will must be submitted to God's law.

> "But, above all, the victory is most sure
> For him who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
> To yield entire submission to the law
> Of conscience,"

illustrates the point—indeed, is simply another expression of the same truth. For, even should the divinity and spiritual import of the Bible be doubted—if its excellent moral precepts be allowed, and there be a willingness to conform to them, such willingness, if actual, will ultimately insure a perfect belief of the highest claims of the Bible. "No man is so ignorant in religion as to know nothing of the truth. * * * Now, Christ says, if any man will do His will, *as far as he already discovers it*, he shall know," &c. If there be a simple willingness to do what is already received, further and fuller knowledge shall follow. And just here—in the obstinate aversion of the will to doing what pierces and crucifies selfishness—lies the great barrier to spiritual insight. "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (*Job* xxviii, 28.) Take an example. A worldling who questions the spiritual doctrines of Christ, but admires His practical precepts, resolves upon reformation, and takes these precepts for his guidance. At the end of the first day, what is the result? In the whirl of business, the old leaven of avarice begins to work, and equity is violated. When the shades of evening gather around him, and the rush and strife of trade give place to the quiet thoughts of home, he is obliged, on reviewing his actions, to write—failure. The next day, he is more guarded, and succeeds better; the third, and no special occurrence brings him into condemnation. The fourth comes; the usual scenes and excitements are met with composure and self-complacency. Suddenly he is assaulted by a temptation, from a source of which he never dreamed. His honor, the honor of his family, is

impugned. The calm man is on fire. I'll be avenged! he cries. Alas! he has forgotten One hath said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay!" Satisfaction is sought and obtained. Ah! Samson could be held with new ropes while asleep; but let him hear the cry, "The Philistines be upon thee!" and go out and shake himself, and the cords are snapped like tow before the flame.

Human nature can be kept decent and orderly, if nothing occurs to arouse its slumbering corruption; but let this demon be maddened, and where then are all the bonds of reason? Look now at the guilty man. The night has closed upon him; and in its solemn, hushed stillness, conscience awakes, and, with self-accusing voice, compels him to write again, as the great tears drop upon the page—failure, failure. But what is going on in his mind? He is coming to knowledge—making the discovery that he is a sinner, depraved and helpless; that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" "that they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "He had not known sin but by the law; the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." His aching heart looks around for help, but refuge fails him. He groans and roars with grief, and cannot be comforted. He is bound by a power he cannot break. He is on the verge of despair, and he cries as one who feels its horrid, chilling shadows are stealing over him, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Hark! a voice sounds through the awful silence! Lo, a form bright and glorious shines through the midnight darkness! It is the voice, the face of Jesus! "Come unto Me!" Rapturously he shouts, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" What, then, is "the law but our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ?" Does this man doubt any longer the divinity and spirituality of the Gospel? "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" that its glorious doctrines are true. O ye proud and foolish ones, puffed up with fleshly wisdom, with the vain conceits of worldly philosophy, how can ye discern the Son of God, and perceive the mysteries revealed unto babes, when ye refuse to submit to the only infallible test of spiritual religion? Ye prefer sacrifice to obedience. Ye would fill God's nostrils at once with the incense of your boasted culture, and the stench of your folly and immorality! "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new-moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assem-

blies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity." (*Isaiah*, i, 13.) Only he who is penetrated with the spirit of the Word can understand its teaching. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it (the messiahship and divinity of Christ) unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And as in originally coming to knowledge, so afterwards, he who follows most closely the footsteps of Jesus, lives most rigidly in the observance of the law, will have the deepest insight to spiritual truth, the clearest discernment of Divine providence, and the most positive and reliable views of practical duty. While, on the contrary, he who follows Christ afar off, and presumes to atone for his delinquencies by sacrifices, will be confounded. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," "but the way of the wicked is as darkness; in the greatness of his folly, he shall go astray."

The same course of development and illustration might be pursued in the treatment of all the Christian graces. It could be shown that life, vigor, beauty, can be imparted to them only by uniform devotedness to duty. The richest tracery-work may be exquisitely delineated on the porcelain, but, until burnt in the furnace, it cannot stand. The most thoroughly orthodox theories of practical religion may be gathered from books; the virtues all may be accurately learned from the teachers—their force acknowledged and beauty admired; and they may acquire a sort of sentimental existence in the mind; but they never inhere in a man's very being, subsisting in all his thoughts and feelings, and inseparable in all their robustness and beauty from his own individuality, until, in addition to being learned by rote, they are burnt and fixed into his heart in the intensest fires of actual obedience and submission. Thus instinct with a man's own consciousness, they shall last while he himself endures.

The *third* and last general argument offered to show the superiority of obedience to disobedience, even though attended with sacrifices, is the stronger proof it affords the world of the reality and divinity of the Christian religion.

This is no small consideration, when we reflect that it is mainly through the practical exhibition of the advantages of Christianity that men are to be brought to accredit and espouse it. "Let your

light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The salvation of the world is made to depend upon the shining of true religion in the lives of believers. It is not difficult to determine which of two characters makes the best impression upon the mind of an observer—one distinguished for uniform observance of duty, that moves on steadily in the path of uprightness, or one marred by irregularities of conduct and temper, and yet expects the favor of God and the church by occasional or frequent sacrifices. Men will try Christianity by its practical fruits, as seen in its professors. What does it accomplish for mankind? To this test, every theory of every science which claims public confidence is brought. Does it belong to the natural sciences? Then, is it supported by facts? Is it a new measure in politics? Then, does it work well? Of what advantage is it to the nation? If none, time and common sense soon work its destruction, and it is only remembered as the vagary of some dreamer. Those who want the time or the disposition to investigate the original sources of scriptural evidence will judge of the title of Christianity to belief by its effects in the church. Does it make its possessor a better parent, child, neighbor, citizen? Is he more faithful to engagements—happier, sweeter, holier, in temper and word? Does it effect more for him than worldliness does for the worldling? If the Christian can show the power of Divine grace to transform the nature, to restrain in prosperity, and to transmute the sorrows of life into joys, then will his influence for good be positive and effective. But the world will hoot the man from its presence, and with him the religion he professes, who has the hardihood to attempt to hoodwink it with his large behests to charity, when it knows, and he knows, that he is daily breaking the plainest laws of love.

But let Christianity be brought to this inflexible standard. Go to the career of Jesus of Nazareth! Behold Him as He traverses the hills and valleys of Palestine, as He threads the streets of Jerusalem and Capernaum! His whole life teems with mercy; His lips are ever breathing words of wisdom and consolation; His hands are ever open with acts of love and healing; His feet are ever swift on errands of kindness and relief; and when He pauses in His way, it is to impart strength to the faint and sinking heart, deeming this a greater proof of His messiahship than to pronounce an eloquent discourse upon His divinity! "He went about doing good." Jesus Christ came

from heaven, not simply to teach and to atone, but to clothe in flesh and blood the sublime doctrines and precepts which he came to establish—to embody in living form those immortal principles which originated in the infinite benevolence and justice of God. This He accomplished, and now forever remains an example unto us, that as He was, even so we should be, in this world. And from these principles, as so many seed-powers in the hearts of His disciples, have grown the great philanthropic institutions of the day, which constitute the crowning glory of modern civilization.

I am glad that Jesus lived among the people, met and answered the great questions and difficulties of ordinary life. I am not less happy in the conviction that His religion is designed not alone for the scholar, the poet, the recluse, if at all for them as such, but for every-day people—people who have to do with the things which occupy

> "The talk
> Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
> Of the world's business."

In the great arena of the world, in the thickest of the battle of life, amid its din and dust, its smoke and carnage, the Christian is to enter, "stand in his lot as a good soldier, devour the many chagrins of it," fight and conquer, and thus show to the thronging multitudes, the brain and muscle men of the land, that Christianity is divine because human, from God because fit for man—that it can make a Christian successful on Christian principles, can transform business into means of grace, transmute gold into godliness, convert the hum of industry into the hymn of praise, the counting-room, the workshop, the field, into a temple of worship, to the glory of God and the honor of the Redeemer; and so realize the glorious symbol of the prophetic vision, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." (*Zach.*, xiv, 20.) Infidelity has striven hard to drive Christianity from practical life. Its last and convulsive effort was to out-do it in works of humanity; and wildly, though plausibly, theorizing about equality, fraternity, and liberty, it has boastfully said, the religion of suffering can now be politely bowed out of society, as no longer needed. But the effort has proved a failure, and this day the credit must be awarded to Christian men, that there is not a great public movement, which looks to the amelioration of the race, that had not its origin in their hearts, and the prosecution of which is not in their hands. And this shall be till

"Change wide and deep, and silently performed,
This land shall witness; and as days roll on,
Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect,
Even till the smallest habitable rock,
Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs
Of humanized society, and bloom
With civil arts, that send their fragrance forth,
A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven."

Christians! your weapon for the conquest of the world is obedience. Your sacrifices, if they spring from it, will have power over the hearts of men, and be acceptable to God; but as atonements for sin, substitutes for integrity, never! One sacrifice alone can be received as vicarious for sin, and it solely because obedience without it was impossible. "There remaineth now, therefore, no more sacrifice for sin." And what is remarkable, that great sacrifice, made once for all to put away sin, was itself an act of obedience. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." It is your constant exemplification of the Gospel, in its rich experience and practice, which will do more to win souls to Jesus than all the professions of the mighty, the benefactions of the wealthy; nay, more than all the sermons and writings of the wise and good. Herein lies the real need of the times—holiness to the Lord. Regular living, regular praying, working, and giving, patient continuance in well-doing, in all that is pure, lovely, and of good report, will impart to the church's forces and appliances a grand and mighty momentum, which will bear down all opposition. Her progress, like the awful and sublime sweep of the spheres, though silent, will be certain and glorious. So shall the Gospel be vindicated from the foul aspersion that salvation by faith in an atonement is only an invention of orthodoxy, to rid men of the responsibility of obedience by devising an easy and wholesale remedy for their abominations. "Do we, then, make void the law of God through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." This constitutes the perpetually recurring miracle of Christianity—"the sign which shall never be cut off"—the works which Christ's disciples shall do in all ages greater than His own works, because performed on a more wide-spread scale, and more comprehensive in their results. From all which let us learn, that "To obey is better than sacrifice;" and "To love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Alex H. Vinton

THE STRENGTH AND THE WEAKNESS OF YOUTH.

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I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong.—1 *John*, ii, 14.

He had written likewise to little children, and to fathers—to each an appropriate message, and on special grounds.

To the young men he writes, because they are strong. It is a natural inquiry, what there might be in the strength of young men to call for an apostolic letter. What would be the character of such an epistle? Would it congratulate them on their achievements, admire their attainments, flatter them with their importance, and foreshadow a career of unhindered success?

Or would the emphatic recollection of a young man's strength provoke an old man's caution, remind him of the dangers of strong powers, and so dictate a letter of admonition, exhorting young men to be wise as well as strong, and to make haste slowly?

The answer to this question might depend on another, viz: What makes the young man strong? Is it moral, mental, or physical power—either one alone, or all together?

The Apostle has answered this question, and shown us how and why he wrote to his young men. He indicates the quality of their strength, shows how it has already attested itself, and draws an appeal of duty from their actual success.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong; and have overcome the wicked one, and the Word of God abideth in you. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

We see how an Apostle, wise both from age and from grace, addressed a band of Christian young men, whose strength was of the most unquestionable quality—moral strength—tested already by holy enterprise—a godly energy exhibiting the highest type of young manhood.

And then, how should we address the young men of this congregation?

That too should depend upon who and what they are. As this is beyond my power to determine, it is safe and therefore proper not to assume too much. I cannot say, in the full latitude of the Apostle's expression, "Ye have overcome the wicked one, and the Word of God abideth in you." This thought may better come in by-and-by for an exhortation, rather than now as a congratulation.

I assume, therefore, only one thing—that being young, you are strong—strong, in some sense of that word.

Let it be my object to indicate how a young man's strength may be made perfect, in all senses of the word. And may He, without whom nothing is strong or holy, be with me to speak, and with you to hear.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong."

If we should cast about for a living type of strength, I apprehend it would come to our minds in the shape of young manhood.

Other attributes might embody themselves before us in different forms.

For gentleness and sensibility, the image would be a woman; for docility and dependence, a child clinging to his father's hand as he walked; for rugged, persistent fortitude, a full-aged man of forty-five, inured to trial, care-hardened beyond the melting of tears; while for caution and slowness of judgment, the picture should be that of an old man at the fireside, dealing out parcels of experience.

But for living, effective power, the human type is a young man. His step is a stride. The lighting down of his arm is a blow. His very standing still is strong; and if he could then be transformed into marble, that statuary quiet would still betray the strength creeping unconsciously through every limb and muscle, and bespeak the bounding of a heart against its stony ribs.

Mere resisting weight might seem to be wanting, but the constant self-restoring energy compensates that lack, and makes up that sum total of momentum which is strength.

Physically, therefore, young manhood, in its normal shape, is the truest impersonation of power.

And this outward man is a not untrue index of that which is within. If the muscles swell, it is because the spirit within is a galvanic battery, simmering and seething with the ceaseless production of power. If the red blood mantles the cheek, it is from the soul working at the heart. If the step is strong, it is because the will is determined. If the eye flashes, it is because there is hope and daring and ambition looking through the eye to the mind's great ideal. So that a young man's real strength is begotten of his spiritual nature. Let us dissect his spiritual frame, then, and discover the elements of this inworking power.

I. First, then, young manhood is the period of strong passions and appetites. They come out then into their first license, and some of them into their first consciousness, and, like everything else in nature, they work strongest when first developed. By-and-by they will be exhausted with over-action, or wearied out with defeat, and will live only in the insensible form of habits. But now they are rampant, self-conscious, importunate. They make large demands on the life, and use up a large share of its vigor. They work themselves in among the motives of the soul. They color the sentiments, dictate the tastes, engross the time, and sometimes shape the whole path, of a young man's daily life. They develop the full power of his animal nature as it never has been before, nor will be at all if not now. The capacity for wickedness is measured by the strength and indulgence of the passions. The highest reach of virtue will consist in the power to bridle and subdue them. Which of the two is the great problem for a young man to determine for himself? This is the crisis in the life of the passions and in his life. As they are sovereign, he is a poor slave. As they are controlled, he is a man—free, lord of creation, because master of himself.

Again, in the second place, the period of young manhood is apt to be the period of pride—a strong power for good or evil—a grand or a mean quality—the prompter of a noble ambition if well directed, or else degenerating into self-conceit and forcible feebleness—making a man a hero or a dandy, a Webster or only a Brummell.

When a youth is just let loose from the restraints of boyhood, and sent out to take a man's part in the world, feeling the freedom in his very veins, what can be more natural than that all other importance

should dwindle by the side of his own? The world is all before him, and seems to be all for him. He longs to try his new-fledged pinions—to realize his ambition to show how he can do the world's work in less time than other men, and succeed where they have failed. Full of self-reliance, he cannot but be sanguine. He scouts advice, calls caution cowardice, and, as his life has been without experience, he has no such word in his vocabulary. He knows enough already, and pronounces on all subjects like a master.

I need not stop to delineate all the workings in and out of this youthful pride. Its features, color, and expression, are familiar to us all. It is enough for our purpose to recognise it as one of the forces which go far to determine the character of young men, and so as a part of their strength.

Next to this, in the third place, is another co-ordinate force, viz: self-will.

This is an offshoot of the sense of freedom which I have mentioned, and grows naturally out of the first consciousness of power.

As the will is itself only an executive faculty, receiving its impulse from other forces of the character, its quality will be determined by theirs.

Give up a young man's will to his passions and his pride, and it will seem as if there were a master demon driving him, with his eyes open, to destruction. If he is thwarted, he rebels. If he is defeated, he commits suicide.

When I thus name passion, pride, and self-will, as the great constitutional forces in the character of youth, do I not draw a picture in which the shadows predominate over the lights?

Is it not evident that such a character needs some compensating force on the other side—some element of strength to overmatch these, and forefend their mischief?—specially when you look abroad, and think of the age and the land we live in, and of all the peculiar influences that mould the character here.

In our country, everything is precocious. Under our institutions, all are free. By our system, the child is not father of the man; the child is the man. The spirit of independence is breathed in with the atmosphere, and nurtured by education. The theory of independence is lisped from the school-book, and trumpeted from the platform and the stump. The effects of it flash and coruscate through the whole illuminated path of our history. Our admirable achieve-

ments, in war and peace, are its legitimate fruits. Our national energy, a proverb now throughout the world, is the exponent of it—full of emphasis, full of meaning.

But the national energy is only the energy of individuals aggregated into a mass. And energy itself is only another name for strong power of will.

When, then, our young men are sent out at an earlier age than those of any other nation to wield the responsibilities of life, in the mart and in the forum, with their faculties thus grown under the influences of independence, does not the thought gather emphasis—a solemn emphasis, too—that there needs to be a compensating power to overrule the strength of our young men, and to guide it all to good? Is there, then, in the character of youth, no such force, latent or active?

There is, thank God for it, a place for such a power—a central place dug deeply by the finger of God into the nature of every man, in his very heart of hearts; I mean the conscience. Every man has the sense of it, for every man knows the difference between ought and ought not. But it is not, alas! a faculty so commonly developed in young men as to be pronounced characteristic. It forms no essential part of his strength, but it is indispensable in order to make his strength safe. It is the only power to control effectually his passions, his pride, and his self-will. It will do this, for conscience is of royal pedigree. Its nature is divine. Its authority is telegraphed down from heaven.

When God shaped the human soul, and assigned to each faculty its place, He reserved one high and central seat, which He canopied with His own peculiar glory; and there He enthroned the conscience to be ruler over the soul, as the viceroy of the soul's creating God. From its presence and power springs the whole sense of moral obligation. Its presence is like a felt omniscience. Its power is like the thought, "Thou, God, seest me." We may profess to ignore it, may violate it, even dethrone it. But it is kingly, even in the dust. We cannot meet its eye, though it be prostrate, and not feel that it is a prostrate majesty, whose rebuke and threat remind us of a terrible judgment. If we could suppose a person to be deprived of it, he would have lost the glory of his faculties—would be a moral idiot. No man can be the man God meant him to be, unless the conscience occupies its rightful place of authority. Let this wanting element be supplied to the strength of young men, and their strength

is perfect. The passions, instead of consuming the very material of feeling, will lend their fire to other faculties, and become cooled into lawful and genial desires. The sentiment of pride will expand itself into the holy ambition of achieving a Christ-like character. The overmastering will, no longer a perverse and profane self-will, will be turned in consecration to the will of God. So will the young man have "overcome the wicked one"—the devil without, or that other devil within him, viz: his own selfish self.

But though I thus speak of conscience as the chief faculty of the human soul, let us remember it is still of the soul, and, though divine in its authority, is still in its infirmities human. The lower faculties may become higher than it. Passion may blind it, pride pervert it, self-will supplant it. Hence conscience needs a foreign aid to establish its power and use in the great experiment of life. It needs the tutelage of a better life than this. It needs a revelation. The guaranty of our moral strength is conscience taught by the Word of God. "Ye are strong," says the Apostle, "and the Word of God abideth in you." See what omnipresent sufficiency there is in the Word of God to be the director of a young man's conscience, by meeting his nature in all the forms of its trial. See how comprehensive its instruction, which the Apostle sums up in a phrase, "Love not the world."

He does not mean the natural world, with its green beauty, its glorious garniture of sky and sea and rock, of field and forest, of sunlight and shadow, feeding the taste and stirring the imagination; nor the natural world, with its secrets of science, its mechanism and laws, its geologies and botanies and astronomies—the world of granite, of flowers, or of stars—a boundless field of mental activities. He does not mean, "Love not the world" of human life, its social organizations, its friendships and home scenes—yea, its commerce, its enterprise, its collisions of thought, its strife and battle of improvement. He does not mean, turn hermit, as if you could scourge your loves by hunger, or scarify your soul with a hair shirt. God's Word is genial, not ascetic.

But "love not the world" in its antagonism to conscience and the soul and immortality. Love it not in its three potential forms of sin—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"—"for these are not of the Father, but of the world," and pass away with it, and are therefore not enough for your immortality.

"As the Word of God abideth in you, you will be exempt from profane loves, and will overcome the world; bring thus your moral strength to bear against this triple alliance of the wicked one." This is what he wrote to the young men then.

The skies are changed, but are we changed? Is there nothing in the passions, pride, and self-will, of early manhood, that finds its natural expression in "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," now, as much as ever? Look around you. Look within. You cannot leave this house of God, to find your homes to-night, but you will meet with some meretricious tempter—the lust of the flesh incarnated and adorned—the "wicked one" dressed in human witchery, to beguile you to the chambers of pollution. You cannot join your associates to-morrow, but some gross tongue will suggest gross thoughts of that indulgence which "hardens all within, and petrifies the feeling."

To keep down this prurient lust, to make it wait on conscience and the soul, you need to counteract its young strength with the indwelling Word of God. You need to reinforce the claims of your moral nature by the truths of another life. You need to recall the solemn testimony of the Bible, that you have a soul to save, an eternity to win, a God to serve whose smile or frown is to you as life or death. Conscience needs this flaming sword, turning every way to guard the entrance of your soul, and keep it pure—a reclaimed Paradise, where God will dwell with your spirit affectionately. Your heart needs to be regenerated by this indwelling Word, so that love divine shall supplant and overshadow the lusts of the flesh, and that all "carnal affections may die, and all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow."

This will save a young man from being consumed, body and soul, by his passions. The fire of his nature, instead of burning like a hell within him, will be transformed into the glow of godliness, and he will be "strong" in the victory over his lusts.

Another of the enemies of the young man is "the lust of the eye," a part of "the world" which he must not love. I understand this expression to denote the desire for those objects which are not necessary for life or comfort, but only to be hoarded like riches, or to be displayed, like fashionable dress, a showy equipage, a gorgeous mansion. If ever young men were in danger of this sin of the world, it is our young men. How many of them, when entering on a clerk-

ship, propose to themselves this distinct aim, viz: *to be rich*, not for usefulness, nor even for enjoyment, but simply for the sake of *dying rich;* not to feed the hungry with their surplusage, to clothe the naked, support the Gospel, endow a hospital, but to build splendidly, and outdo their peers in pomp and sumptuousness.

The desire for gain is not necessarily mischievous. Every man who undertakes a business has a right to urge it on to its most brilliant result.

Few things are so interesting in our survey of life as successful enterprise. It tells well for mankind, helps the community, advances civilization. But when the impulse springs from the mere love of money, the moral of the story is changed. When a man has concentrated all his hopes and aspirations to simple gain; when he has narrowed and pointed his whole spiritual consciousness towards the next piece of coin, and compressed his soul within the periphery of a dollar—I speak not of the pitiful exhibition he makes of humanity, but looking at him through the glass of God's immortal truth—I ask you to note and tremble while you note the profane prostitution of the moral sense, the scorn of his conscience, the gross idolatry of this man of Christendom, idolatry as gross as a heathen's, and far worse in its moral complexion, because the Christian-born man knows better. Whether the lust of the eye take this or the other form of display and fashion, let the young man fortify himself against it. It will make dishonest clerks and mean men. Whatever else might restrain him from crime, his conscience will not. He may be afraid of the "lock-up," he may even have sensibility enough to stand in wholesome awe of State street and the brokers' board. But beware of him. He gets his morality from mammon. To this god of his idolatry he has given himself a holocaust, body and soul, and very soon, it may be, no fraud will be too stupendous for his gloating avarice. It will seize the treasury of a railroad, or gorge a Mexican mine; and if detection stares his felony in the face, he has, as his grand offset, flight, exile and death in a foreign land, or a dose of strychnine in his own chamber. Would a young man be saved from this moral ruin, at which angels might weep and demons laugh, let him have the Word of God abiding in him. Let him learn the godlike use of riches. Let him understand that wealth is a divine power, with which he may imitate his Maker, dispense benefits to the world, bring sinners to the Saviour, and make the unrighteous mammon

purchase habitations in heaven. With this for his grand ultimate, he may lay forth his whole energies to the strife of gain. His strong will shall no longer be a moral weakness, but a power co-ordinate with conscience itself, and the lust of the eye looking eagerly for useless gains will be reformed into the sacred passion of doing good.

Now, once more let us contemplate another temptation of a young man, levelled point blank at one of his strongest propensities. "The pride of life," St. John calls it, which I understand to mean the incentives to youthful ambition. It may take many shapes, but its common American forms are the pride of intellect, the ambition of political distinction, and the love of office, sometimes all combined in one.

Every American is a politician; a zealous politician is naturally a partisan, and the reward of partisan devotion is office.

There is hardly any bane of morality so deadly as strict devotion to party interests and the strife for place. A mere politician must have two consciences—one for himself and another for his party; and these, being mutually destructive of each other, are equivalent to no conscience at all. He must connive at practices that he would not dare to own, and resort to shifts that would compromise any private reputation, and can only excuse himself to his better self by the shameful plea of the necessity of the party, an excuse that shows him not humble, but degraded; not modest, but mean; not bending before a true majesty for that divine approval which will make him a truer and a nobler man, but prostrate and flat before a tyranny so base that it can receive no devotion which is not debasement.

Such a politician, with a conscience drugged and drunken with ambition, will scruple at no indirection, will huckster away his country's honor for his own advancement, and perhaps for the Presidency of a nation of freemen will lend himself to a conspiracy against the very life of freedom itself.

In what melancholy contrast stands this type of political partisanship to him who was the grand living archetype of what an American politician should be—him whom we lovingly name "the Father of his Country," who by subordinating all claims to the sovereignty of conscience, turned politics into patriotism, and made devotion to the interests of his country identical with the loftiest virtue of man. What our politics need, even to starvation, is a great national conscience. Our young men need it most of all, for they are the nation

that is to be. They need the felt power of the Word of God, teaching them that the Lord reigneth, let the people tremble; teaching them that nations have a judgment day; that, therefore, parties are amenable to the tribunal of morality; that a vote is a moral act, and that political drill without conscience is a sin.

I have not time to dwell on other forms of pride tempting to a young man's nature, and abhorrent to the Word and Spirit of God. But remember, "by that sin fell the angels," and many a man has so made shipwreck of his salvation. The Bible would have brought him to his knees—kept him low at "the footstool," and opened up to his open eye of faith a better path of glory, honor, and immortality. This is the ambition that is both warrantable and saving—the eagle pride of a child of God, soaring high, seeing far, and not afraid to plunge up into the very brightness of the firmament, coveting a place in the eternal glory.

Happy the young man who has learned from the Word of God so to exalt his pride. He need not eradicate it from his nature, need not crucify it, but only surrender it to his conscience, and then this strong point of his character will be his salvation.

And now, my friends, will you pardon me for yet one closing word. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong."

I have attempted to disclose the naturally strong traits in the character of a young man, and to show that unless they are trained by conscience, this natural strength is moral weakness; but that when so approved and sanctified, the fire of passion, the loftiness of pride, and the energy of self-will, may become the forces of a great and holy character. Conscience being the ruler, and the Word of God the rule, the young man may battle successfully with the world's lusts, and be crowned in heaven.

As I speak of such an one, I almost seem to see him. I see him in the first noblest act of loyalty to God and truth, in his closet on his knees, acknowledging his dependence upon sovereign grace and power; there surrendering his whole being to Him who died to save him.

I see him next in the street, in the parlor, in the gatherings of young men. He turns a deaf ear to the charmer; he refuses the intoxicating cup; he conquers all the lusts of the flesh.

I see him in the counting room, the shop, the workshop. He is a faithful clerk, an honest cashier, a diligent workman.

I see him in the strife of politics, on the platform, in the street canvass, at the polls, aiming at right ends, and only by lawful means.

I see him afterwards as a man with his earlier virtues grown stout and stiff about him—true, honorable, faithful to conscience. His word is his bond; his name is a capital.

I follow his life of energy, beneficence, and moral worth, as it is reinforced by conscientiousness and daily prayer and the Word of God. I see him, in a word, a Christian man.

And then I see him die. He lifts his failing voice, and murmurs, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith—henceforth there is a crown laid up for me." "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name be the praise." "By the grace of God, I am what I am." "Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord." Yes! *Victory* through Jesus Christ.

His chest heaves to its last gasp with that utterance, and he breathes out his spirit with the words "victory" and "Christ" still clinging to his lips.

And then I see him no more; but we know where the victory in Christ is crowned, and we know that as he meets his ascended Lord, he feels a hand of blessing on his head, and hears a thrilling voice of welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Young men, among you all, whose portrait have I sketched?

Geo. B. Baldwin

FELLOW-HELPERS OF THE TRUTH.

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We ought, therefore, to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.—3 *John*, 8.

In this text the phrase, "the truth," is distinctive. It is the inspired title given to the divine system of revealed religion. That system is emphatically worthy of this title. It was complete in all its great generalities and minute particulars, in the mind of God, from eternity; but its development to the human mind has been gradual. During the Adamic and Patriarchal periods, its great outlines were dimly drawn out; during the Mosaic dispensation, those outlines became more sharply defined, and during the Prophetic age still more clearly revealed; but after the advent, death, and resurrection of our Lord, after the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit, then its development was complete, and it stood before the believing mind in its divine originality, as one sublime whole, harmonious in all its parts, symmetrical in all its proportions, and adapted with unerring exactitude to the necessities of a ruined world. This truth was committed to the primitive church, and in our text the Apostle urges the duty of fraternally receiving and aiding those who had professed that truth at the hazard of their lives, and were laboring for its propagation, in order "that they might be fellow-helpers to the truth."

Thus viewed, these words suggest this doctrinal proposition, to a discussion of which I invite your attention.

Christian Truth has a great work to accomplish; it needs help; we may help it; we ought to be its "fellow-helpers."

This doctrinal statement, you perceive, has four distinct points. Let us consider these in their order. And may the "Spirit of all Truth" graciously aid us in their discussion!

I. *Christian Truth has a great work to accomplish in this world.* Thus saith the Lord, in Isaiah, lv, 11: "As the rain and the snow cometh down from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I send it." Here, you perceive, this truth, sent forth by the Eternal, on a definite errand—to accomplish a distinct purpose—to effect some positive "thing;" and you observe the pledge of the resources of the Godhead to secure its prosperity in that mission; for He saith, "It shall prosper in the thing whereunto I send it."

What is that mission? It is a work for God and for man. Look at it, first, in its more direct relations to God. Having fitted up this world to be the residence of man, and then having created him in His own image, and so constituted him that his highest good should be connected with knowing, loving, and serving his Creator, both a regard for His own glory, as well as for His creatures, would lead Him to desire that they should have correct views of His character—know and love Him. But one of the first effects of sin on man was to lead him away from his God, and a characteristic feature of his depravity ever since has been false notions in all his conceptions of Divinity. The evidence is overwhelming, that the masses of men have no true ideas of the nature, character, and government of God. On this account, our Lord exclaimed, "Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." And yet the decree, old as eternity, was, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." The promulgation of that decree was followed by the intensified edict, "As I live, saith the Lord, the earth shall be full of my glory." And the mission of truth is, like an opening day, to dissipate this blinding darkness, and present God with the clearness of a noontide sun in a cloudless sky, as the Creator and lawful Sovereign of this world; to proclaim, with a voice rotund and distinct as a trumpet-tone, majestic and authoritative as the thundering of Sinai, "Jehovah, He is God, and beside Him there is none other;" and to enforce upon each and every human being the practical exhortation, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby shall good come unto thee."

Consider next this work in its more direct relations to man.

Through its instrumentality, men are not only to receive correct views of God, but of themselves. False notions of our own real character, higher duties, and destiny, inevitably result from false notions of God; they have sprung up spontaneously from the soil of human depravity, and systems of error have contributed to support and nourish them. And God hath forcordained that His truth shall consume all these noxious developments of depravity, and be "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, the joints and the marrow, and be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In the prosecution of this work, divine truth reveals to us, that with all our supposed goodness, we are wicked sinners; with all our apparent innocence, we are guilty sinners; with all our wealth, we are poor sinners; with all our freedom, we are enslaved sinners; with all our light, we are blind sinners; with all our knowledge, we are ignorant sinners; with all our power, we are helpless sinners; with all our life, we are spiritually dead sinners—who, left to ourselves, will, must be inevitably lost.

Another object of truth, in this relation, is to exhibit the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour exactly adapted to the necessities of such sinners—to exhibit, not the ethereal Christ of a transcendental imagination—not the dead Christ of a christianized paganism—not the cold, creature Christ of a baptized infidelity, but the living, loving Christ of the Bible, in the essential divinity of His nature, the virtue of His vicarious atonement, the infinitude of His love, the perfection of His salvation, the universality of His offers of mercy, and His complete adaptation to the necessities of guilty, condemned, helpless, blind, poor, dead sinners. And while, as we shall presently see, an almighty agent gives the essential efficiency, still it is affirmed that "The Word of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;" that "We are begotten by the Word of truth;" that "We are to be sanctified through the truth;" that we are to "purify our souls," by "obeying the truth."

Now, the direct and resultant influence of Christianity, while fulfilling these purposes, is so great as to permeate everything around us in this land, and be observable in every direction. You may see it in our school-houses as well as our sanctuaries, at our weddings as well as our funerals, brooding with maternal tenderness over our family circles, guiding and giving wholesome vitality to our business

enterprises, generating and fostering noble charities and public reforms, moulding and sustaining our political institutions, directing and guarding our national destiny. Yea, we have seen thousands coming to it out of darkness, and being illumined—for "it is a sun;" we have seen diseased and crippled ones come to it and be healed—for it is a "Bethesda pool;" we have seen throngs come from life's dusty chase, thirsty and faint, and drink—for it is a "well of living waters;" we have seen hungry souls come to it, eat, and be satisfied—for it is the "bread of life;" we have seen penitent sinners come to it, bowed with guilt, and go away rejoicing—for "it is a mercy-seat;" we have seen afflicted ones, tossed on the stormy waves, come to it and become settled—for it is an "anchor sure and steadfast;" we have seen dying ones press it to their expiring bosoms, and heard them exclaim, "O Death, where is thy sting?"—for it insures resurrection and eternal life!" Thus, my brethren, is divine truth wondrously adapted to the work assigned it! Have we not found it so in our personal experience? Hath it not been unto us the "Word of our salvation?" Hath it not made us free men in Christ Jesus? Hath it not been to us a firm basis of hope in hours of despair, strength in hours of weakness, joy in hours of sorrow, encouragement in hours of despondency, light in hours of darkness? And how inexhaustible the system of divine truth is! Who has ever imagined himself to have fathomed its vast depths, or trodden upon the topmost elevations of its golden mountains of thought, or felt the full force of its grand motives, or dreamed of having taken into his mental comprehension all of its ineffable and divine revealings!

II. *In the accomplishment of this work, "the Truth" needs help.*

This is the second branch of our doctrinal statement. In our text, the early Christians were urged to take a course, indicated by the context, in order that they might be "fellow-helpers to the truth." This exhortation is obviously based upon the idea that it needs help, and a brief glance at its nature will reveal the correctness of that idea. What is truth? It is not a personal existence, as an angel or man is. It is not of itself endowed with powers of locomotion. It is spiritual reality, which in itself considered has no power to bring itself in contact with the human mind. Nay, it may justly be compared to gold, deeply imbedded in the earth, which, however valuable, has no power to force its way through the superincumbent

mass, and go, self-coined, self-stamped, into circulation. It needs a foreign power brought to bear upon it to bring it forth; it needs the smelting process, the furnace blaze, and the mint stamp, to place it in conditions to be useful; and then it needs helpers to circulate it, in order that it may accomplish the purpose to which it is so admirably adapted. So is it in regard to divine truth. It may indeed be said that God might have emblazoned that truth on the sky, or stamped it upon the leaves of the forest, or by miraculous act have revealed it to human minds as soon as they reached the point of development where it could be received. But He has not done so. He has devised and perfected a divine system of truth, and then, in infinite wisdom, placed it in a position where it is subject to the same laws that govern the development and dissemination of other truths. This is the basis of Paul's grand argument in his epistle to the Romans, in which he says: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. How, then, shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be sent?" Here it is distinctly taught that Gospel truth cannot float on the wind, or sail on the waves, or travel on the land, in order to reach those within whom it has its mighty work to accomplish, and that therefore, because of its own nature, it needs help. So also the fact, that God has foreordained multitudinous agencies and instrumentalities to this end, proves the reality of this necessity. And the further fact, that on almost every page of the Bible we are exhorted to this work, and by the conscious influences of the Holy Spirit we are impelled to it, completes the demonstration of that necessity.

III. *We may help it.*

This is the third point of our doctrine. Before entering upon its discussion, I feel that I should be recreant to my duty if I did not here pause, and ask you to pause with me, in order that we may do reverence to a fundamental article of our faith. I refer to *the relations of the Holy Spirit to this truth.* He is its great efficient helper. He giveth it "the increase." His hand grasps it as His own two-edged sword. He is the "Spirit of Truth," the infallible guide "into all truth." Ah, if every angel in heaven and every man on earth were "helpers to the truth," should the Holy Spirit withhold His omnific aid, it could never accomplish its work, for God or man. Nay, it would utterly and hopelessly fail. We would ever have

sounding in our ears, and influencing all our efforts, the sublime declaration, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

But while this doctrine is firmly believed, while it is depended upon as the basis of success, while we reverently bow our souls before it and glory in it, assuredly it becomes us to listen obediently to the exhortation of that adorable Spirit, as given in this inspired text, wherein we are urged to be "fellow-helpers to the truth." Assuredly it becomes us to listen obediently to the command of our Lord, who saith, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Freely ye have received, freely give." As if He had said, "I have not given My Gospel feet to walk or wings to fly; I have not bidden careering winds 'bear it from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand;' I have not commissioned angels to help it through the earth on its sublime mission, but I have committed it to you, my chosen, redeemed, beloved people, co-heirs, co-laborers with Me; upon you I have conferred this honor and duty, Go ye therefore into all the world; lo, I am with you always."

Is it asked, how may we discharge this duty? I answer—

1. *We help the truth when, having received it ourselves, we obey it and exemplify it in our lives.* Constituted and depraved as men are, my brethren, they will not believe in the great spiritualities of our religion, unless they can palpably see practical exemplifications of them. Hence it is that, however eloquently we may talk or preach of the glory or blessedness of "the truth as it is in Jesus," the world demands practical demonstrations of it. Therefore it is, that although we profess the truth, if we do not live it, if there be not practical applications of it in our lives, we hinder instead of helping it. We prejudice minds against it, instead of influencing them favorably towards it. We block up its way, instead of removing obstacles. In fact, we are really against it, while professing to be for it. We thus "hold the truth in unrighteousness." Hence, it is far better to take a Papist by the hand, speak kindly to him, and give him a Bible, than to ridicule the Pope or any of his bishops. It is far better to lift a drunkard out of the gutter, take him home, and help him to become a man again, than merely to deliver eloquent addresses upon temperance platforms. It is far better for the cause of benevolent truth to actually feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and administer to the pressing necessities of the destitute, than to be forever

prating about charity, and never giving anything. It is far better to develop the beauty and loveliness of our religion, the blessedness resulting from obedience to its precepts, in our personal characters and daily lives, than to argue and debate about them. Oh, brethren, when our spirit, our words, and lives, are in accordance with the holy Gospel we profess, then are we personally living, powerful, influential exemplifications of it. Then are we, emphatically, "helpers to the truth." And this is *in harmony with other facts.* Let a farmer who would help agricultural truth neglect to apply its principles to his own farm, and all he may say will avail nothing; but let him industriously apply those principles to his own land, and realize their results in the superior beauty of his place, in greatly-enlarged harvests, and in the increased value of his estate, then his neighbors will begin to seek after that which has thus benefited him. Fulton helped mechanical truth, not so much by propounding a theory, as by actually building a steamboat. Thus it is that he who lives God's truth efficiently helps it. Be he whosoever he may, be his circumstances whatsoever they may, be he wheresoever he may, he is an "epistle known and read of all men;" he is a living demonstration of the divinity of Christianity. And, oh, if all of us who profess it thus helped it, then would it rapidly accomplish its glorious work in this world; then would no combination of its foes be able to resist its progress, any more effectually than could a party of Swiss boys arrest, by holding out their little hands, the overwhelming avalanche, as it comes crashing, thundering down from the regions of eternal snow.

2. *We help the truth when we do what we can for its establishment at home and dissemination abroad.*

This is done, first of all, by those who organize and sustain Christian churches, each of which is "a pillar and ground of the truth;" who in some destitute portion of the country, or a village, or a city, organize divine models of republicanism on the old Jerusalem platform, and, unfurling the banner of truth as it is in Jesus, keep it up through storm and sunshine, keep it up through discouragements and encouragements, keep it up in adversity and prosperity, and never relax their hold upon the standard until it is loosened by death.

This is done by those who sustain a ministry, called of God to preach "the truth." Such is the definite mission of every minister

of the Gospel. He has authority for preaching nothing else. His business is to "rightly divide the word of truth," and give to each a portion in due season. He is by profession a herald of the truth, who has sworn before the altar to believe it, to love it, to live it, to proclaim it, to help it, so help him God!

This is done by those who erect sanctuaries, where these organized churches may worship, and this ministry may statedly and publicly "hold forth the Word of life." Every such sanctuary is of itself monumental evidence for "the truth"—evidence that where it is located there are believers, who have loved it so well as to give time, money, and toil, to erect a house, from whose pulpit elevation it may throw its pure light upon humanity around—a house to stand for God when they shall have fallen in death—a house where their children may come and remember the God of their fathers—a house where the poor may come and hear the riches of grace treasured up in Christ Jesus, the afflicted may come and find consolation, the tempted and tried may come and gather up strength for the conflict, the despairing may come and receive comfort and hope, the ignorant may come and receive instruction, the aged may come and have their spiritual youth renewed—a house to be made glorious evermore as the earthly tabernacle of Jehovah in Covenant.

This is done by efficiently aiding those organizations, whose prime object is to disseminate the truth. Such, for instance, as Sabbath Schools, Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Home and Foreign Mission Societies—for all these are but different methods of performing the same work—disseminating a knowledge of saving truth through the world. And such, emphatically, is the last and one of the most beautiful and blessed developments of active Christianity—that which bears the name of "the Young Men's Christian Association." Oh, it is a precious helper to the truth! It gloriously exemplifies the essential unity of the Spirit of the Gospel, in the bonds of peace. It makes applications of the truth in directions which had previously been neglected; and because of its increasing potentiality for good, its benign influence upon both the church and the world, the palpable approbation of Heaven rests upon it, and the sympathies of Christendom are gathering around it. Oh, it is a sublime thought, that all these multiplex instrumentalities, under the divine guidance, are working out one grand purpose, one sublime consummation, and that is the universal and permanent triumph of light over darkness,

of love over hatred, of holiness over sin, of eternal truth over every form and development of error. Therefore it is that every one who aids these according to his ability is in fact, and is recognised, both on earth and in heaven, as an efficient helper to the truth.

IV. *We ought to be fellow-helpers to the Truth.*

Having seen the work which the truth has to accomplish; that it needs help; and having seen how we may help it, the last point in our doctrinal proposition is, that we *ought* to be its helpers. And this will appear if we consider—

1. *The nature of the work.* In it are wrapped up the interests of the world. We hear much in our day about the progression of our race, as if that fact alone insured its well-being. But we must remember that there is a progress downward as well as upward, a progress of vice as well as of virtue, of darkness as well as of light, of error as well as of truth; and we should never forget that all progress is positively hurtful, which has not its basis in Bible truth. All else "leads but to bewilder, and dazzles to blind;" all else is a mere "ignis fatuus," beguiling the unwary, leading them from right paths to wander hither and thither, and finally leave them exhausted and ruined. All else is temporary and transient, but truth is stable; truth is firm and abiding; truth is enlightening and sanctifying; truth is strengthening and elevating. It therefore promotes permanent well-being. It elevates, equalizes, and blesses all. It honors God. It places on the glorious brow of Jesus the crown of all the earth. Do you desire such results realized in this world? Then you ought to help the truth.

2. Consider *the debt of gratitude we owe it.* What has it done for us? Nay, I change the form of that question, and ask, What has it not done for us? Ah! all that we are personally, as intellectual and moral beings; all that we are socially, politically, and ecclesiastically; all of our hopes that radiate the future; all that has made us different from the lowest, meanest, and most degraded of earth—for all this we are indebted to the truth, as it is developed in the divine system of Christianity. Therefore I affirm, that mere gratitude dictates that each of us ought to be its active, liberal, zealous helpers.

3. Consider *the present position of Bible truth.* Perhaps at no former period have its enemies been more numerous or malignant than at present. Formalism on the one hand, and infidelity on the other, are the extremes of a long line of opposition to its simple,

unadulterated, sinner-humbling, and God-exalting doctrines. Our holy Bible—hoary with an antiquity of which no other book can boast, environed and impregnated with divinity, radiant with the constellated glory of the entire system of moral and religious truth—is made the grand point of attack. Now it is assailed under one form, and then in another; now the opposition is led on by what seems to be an angel of light, professing great sympathy for its moral teachings, adopting its venerated modes of expression, and yet endeavoring to undermine its claims to inspiration, and thus destroy it; and anon the attack is made by open, avowed, impersonated unbelief. The powers of darkness do congregate, and the hosts of hell do agree, that this blessed volume, which has withstood the storms of eighteen centuries, shall be shorn of its glory, and regarded as an effete thing—a relic of the past, unneeded by the prodigious wisdom of the nineteenth century. Yea, in these days, the Herods and Pilates of error easily become friends. Romanism and Puseyism speak cooingly to each other; German Atheism, imported to Boston, and thence distributed over the land, is croaking, "No God! no God!" while transcendental Pantheism, its first-born child, is screeching, "Everything is God, and God is everything;" Rationalism is offering to inspire us, as truly as prophets and apostles were inspired, while Spiritism is proposing to dispense with inspiration entirely, and substitute in its place what it calls fresh communications from the spirit world.

These exigencies, my brethren, demand from us, if indeed we are its friends, that we stand firmly by, and courageously defend Bible truth. They call upon us, with new zeal, to love it, to profess it, to live it, to preach it, to help it in every possible way; and swear by our God, that let the opposition come from what quarter soever it may—let it come in what form soever it may—let it come as the loud-voiced tempest or thundering hurricane—we will never give it up—nay, we will brace ourselves against the tomb-stones of our fathers, and with one arm around the rugged Cross, and the other grasping the sword of the Spirit, we will do battle for it until our warfare is accomplished. And rest assured that while thus helping the truth, we shall hear voices of cheer sounding in our ears above the din of conflict saying,

> "Go on, pursue, assert the sacred cause,
> Stand forth ye proxies of all-ruling Providence,
> Saints shall assist you with prevailing prayers,
> And warring angels combat at your side."

4. Consider the idea involved in our being urged to be *fellow-helpers to the truth.* From this you perceive that we are not called upon to work alone, make sacrifices alone, aid the truth alone, but merely to be *fellow*-helpers. Ah, what a mighty array have already been engaged in this service! Lofty angels and hoary patriarchs; holy apostles, flaming martyrs, and eloquent preachers; Epaphroditus the messenger, and Gaius the host; Paul the aged, and Timothy the youth; Eunice his mother, and Lois his grandmother—all these, and unnumbered hosts of others, have been helpers. And time would fail me to tell you of the witnesses God has raised up in every age, who have gloried in spending and being spent in this work. And to-day God hath a glorious host of truth-helpers in this world, depraved as it is. He has pious fathers and mothers, who belong to past generations, encouraging and blessing us with their examples, counsels, and prayers. He has hundreds of thousands of children and teachers in Sabbath schools, some of whom are yet to shake the world. He has numerous bands of Christian young men, gathered in consecrated associations, who have laid their all upon His altar. He has devoted ministers, pious deacons, and a "peculiar people," zealous of good works, scattered through all denominations. He has Christian merchants behind their counters, and Christian mechanics in their shops, and Christian farmers on their fields, and Christian physicians and lawyers—all of whom in their several spheres are fellow-laborers. And besides these, there are dying saints, sending back their testimony from the gates of death; and saints in heaven whose works are following them, and ministering spirits on viewless wings, and clouds of prayer arising from millions of heart-altars; and then there is the vast providential government of God, and the entire material universe, both of which are subordinated to His purposes of grace—and all these are helpers. And grander than all this, each of the persons of the adorable Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, is an efficient helper. Oh, what a host! what a transcendently magnificent array! What heart does not cry out, in view of them, "Let me, poor, weak, unworthy though I am, let me have the high privilege of being a fellow-helper with such associates, in such a cause!"

5. Consider, lastly, *that the ultimate triumph of this truth is certain,* and that all who help it shall share in that triumph. It may be, it will be long delayed. God takes time to consummate His

work. "The ages to come" are His, as truly as the ages past. With Him, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Error may conquer in a single battle; it often does; but it shall be conquered in the war. John Milton never uttered a nobler sentiment than when he said, "Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously to misdoubt her strength. Let her grapple with falsehood. Whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
While error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies amid her worshippers."

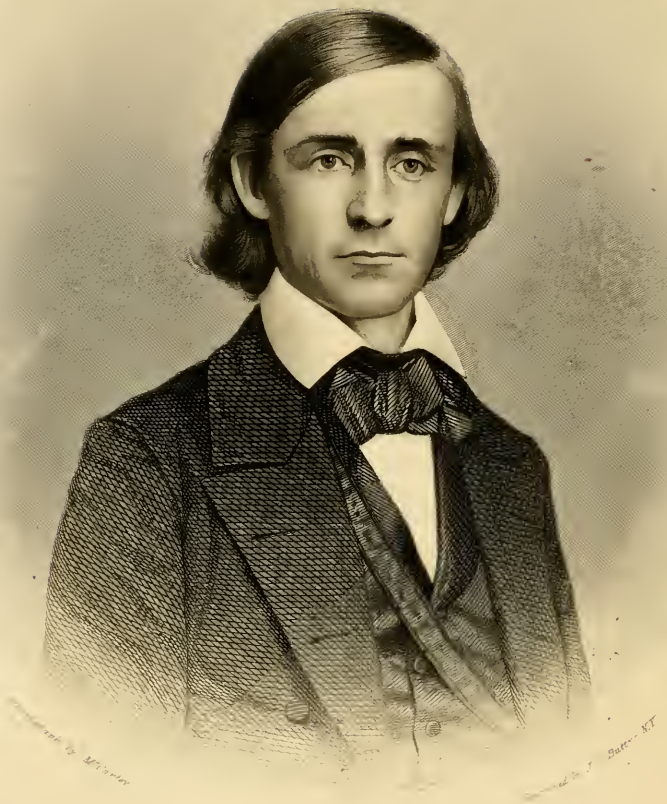
But this triumph is guarantied by an omnipotent Jehovah; it is promised in the covenant of redemption; it is recorded on the page of prophecy; it was beheld from mounts of vision by ancient prophets—and so glorious was the view, that they fell down like dead men before its overwhelming magnificence. It is presaged to the believing heart by the Holy Spirit, so clearly that oftentimes, when clouds and darkness are around Zion, when her enemies shout the pæan of victory, and the ranks of the faithful seem to falter, even then Faith lifts up her voice like a trumpet, and sings—

"Thy saints, in all this glorious war,
Shall conquer, though they die."

Brethren, we shall die; the places that know us now shall know us no more. But though God buries His workmen, He will carry on His work. The thorn-scarred brow of our Redeemer shall wear earth's many crowns. His nail-scarred hands shall sway the sceptre of this world. This earth, which was the scene of His humiliation and ignominious death, shall be the theatre of His glory. Yea, this sin-cursed world, wet with human tears, dripping with human blood, shall again be clad in more than primeval beauty during millennial years, and, as it rolls in its orbit, like a golden censer, shall send up to the God of truth the incense of universal praise. He said that the gates of hell should not prevail against His church; and when Zion, triumphant—decked like a bride waiting for her beloved—is about to ascend to her eternal home, as she looks back upon the theatre of her conflicts, shall shout, with exultant joy, "The gates of hell have not prevailed."

Brethren, when a harvest is gathered after much toil, who sings

most sweetly "the harvest home?" Those who helped in preparing the soil and in sowing the seed. When the independence of our country was achieved, when the fires of Freedom blazed on our hill-tops, when the eagle of victory perched upon our banner of stars, who rejoiced the most, who shared the largest in that triumph? See those aged veterans, a few of whom still linger among us; tell one of them to look over our vast Republic; tell him of its amazing progress and resplendent prospects—and then tell him that, under God, all this is traceable to the independence achieved by our fore-fathers, and you shall see that bent form straighten up, that dull eye flash, that feeble voice grow strong, as he exclaims, "I helped in that struggle; I gave time, toil, and blood, for my country." And you shall feel that he has a right to exult as no other may. He shared the trials—he has a right to share the triumph. So, beloved brethren, it is graciously given unto us, not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ's sake—to have fellowship in suffering, fellowship in sacrifice, fellowship in toil, and then final fellowship in the magnificent glories of the ultimate triumph of truth—personal participation in the splendors of the coronation-day of our Lord.



B. Sunderland

THE EVIL AFFECTING THE UNIVERSE.

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Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?—*Amos*, iii, 6.

I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.—*Isaiah*, xlv, 7.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—*Genesis*, vi, 5.

The first of these passages has another reading to this effect: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord not do somewhat?" This construction, taken with the quotation from Genesis, clearly implies the agency of the creature as well as of the Creator in reference to the existence of evil. In the passage from Isaiah however, God is distinctly represented as the Author of evil. These declarations apparently cast suspicion on the character and government of Jehovah. Is the evil of the universe indeed primarily of divine origination? Can it in all its forms be traced back to the Deity, and fastened upon Him as the only efficient cause of its production? How then, does this view consist with His infinite perfections, or how is it compatible with the responsibility of His rational creatures?

These questions bring us to consider one of the profoundest subjects that has ever engaged human attention—that of the *existence*, *nature* and *authorship* of *evil*—the *relations* of man to it—and the *relations* of God to it.

Now it is but little to say that, however evil may have originated, yet as a matter of fact both the divine and human agencies are inevitably connected with it. Of this great and solemn truth, the history of the world is full of the most amazing and admonitory examples. The ancient deluge and the subsequent crucifixion of

Jesus Christ have each, in their way, proclaimed the mighty but melancholy fact. The great centres of human population in every age have become the monuments of its reality. And everywhere and at all times the conflicts and disasters of the human race have only served to illustrate and impress the fearful fact of existing evil, and to confirm and manifest the equal truth, that man errs and suffers, while at the same time God is also displaying, in this identical series of events, the dispositions of His infinite mind.

In entering therefore, upon a somewhat closer examination of this subject, we shall dwell at present on the *three* following topics of discussion:

I. The nature of evil.

II. How creatures are connected with it.

III. How God is connected with it.

I. First then, as to the nature of evil, we observe that, so far as we can know anything concerning it, the idea of *evil* is presented to our apprehension in these three aspects:

1. *Moral evil*, or *sin*.

2. *Physical evil*, or *suffering*.

3. *Alternative evil*, or that evil which might have resulted from the choice of any other than the present system of the universe.

The conceptions of damage, hurt, injury, loss, mischief, pain, violence, and wrong, some or all of them underlie and form the basis or real groundwork of each of these three aspects of evil. We are somewhat at a loss how further or more clearly to express even our own sense of what this evil truly is. But if possible to make it plain in our meaning, we may remark, there is a divine will, there is a constituted order of nature, and there is an eternal and immutable distinction between right and wrong. Now to a sentient, spontaneous, intelligent, moral, spiritual, and accountable being constituted, conditioned, and developed, in just accordance with this divine will, this order of nature, and this immutable distinction between right and wrong—to such a being, that which is absolutely not to be desired is *evil*, that which is to be desired is *good*. We know of no better way of defining evil in the abstract, or of distinguishing it from good. And consequently, still more certainly, that must be evil at which God, in the divine sympathies and sensibilities of His infinite nature, reluctates.

Then, as to the aspect of moral evil or sin, we see at once that it is

and can be nothing more nor less than the want of conformity to, or the positive transgression of a moral law; and of course that it is and can be produced only by the proper agent or subject of such a law; and of course only by a being who must be, in his own nature, a free, intelligent, moral, and responsible creature. This being so, it is indispensable to a comprehension of the subject that we should have a clear conception of the possibilities and beginnings of moral evil, and of the only conditions of its origin and rise. You see plainly what it is—a violation of moral law—a departure from that spiritual order and consisteney of things, which God has established in the constitution and administration of the existing universe. You see as plainly that it can only arise in the nature and out of the state or action of a free moral being, subject to moral law. And it is equally conclusive, that it must arise in the nature or from the mode of such a being, only upon those occasions which are of the essence of temptation, because the principles of creature mind and the proofs of our experience are such, that this moral evil cannot exist except as it is accompanied by a consciousness of the proximate causes which produced it. These proximate causes are the occasions of temptation, which temptation, as witnessed by the consciousness of the creature, may be present to the mind either from within or from without, and must therefore be, in agreement with the circumstances, either clothed with or divested of the quality of voluntariness. And thus again, temptation itself must be distinguished as of two kinds, when considered in reference to the subjects which hold it forth, or the objects out of which it springs. Temptation is voluntary or involuntary, according to the method of its presentation; but temptation is not in itself properly an evil, when separated from the element of voluntariness. It may be well to illustrate this distinction. When Satan came to tempt the Redeemer, it was on the part of the fallen angel a temptation voluntarily put forth. Hence we call it a *voluntary* temptation, not with reference to Christ, but only with reference to his adversary. But when Achan was tempted at the sight of the wedge of gold, that temptation, arising from an involuntary object, may be termed an *involuntary* temptation. It was contingent on the circumstances, and in itself had no moral quality. Thus we see the difference between these two classes of temptations, which together embrace all the forms of temptation of which it is possible for us to conceive.

Yet, whether the temptation be voluntary or involuntary, as now explained, the sin or act of demerit does not lie in the fact of being tempted, but only in essentially yielding to such temptation. Moral evil has not properly begun prior to the actual submission of the creature to the dominion of the temptation. Temptation, as we have seen in the instance of our Saviour, may arise upon a being purely innocent, and if repelled, makes the innocence of the person tempted even more conspicuous by virtue of the resistance.

These then are the conditions of moral evil—a moral law—a moral being subject to that law—temptations to a violation of the law, such temptations being either voluntary or involuntary, and arising either from within or without the moral being—and finally, an essential submission of the moral being, upon the occasion of the temptation, to that violation of the law in which the sin or moral evil essentially consists. This is all it seems possible for us at present to know of the rise and nature of this kind of evil. It remains only to add, on this point of our examination, that philosophically considered, the first temptation must have been *involuntary*, since any other supposition would necessitate an act of sin prior to that which must have been the first act, which of course is a self-contradiction.

The occurrence of moral evil lays the foundation for the further and consequent existence of physical evil or suffering, embraced in the distinct forms of *natural sequence, positive curse* and the *strict penalty of violated law*. Thus we have, in this view, all that constitutes the pain and disorder of the universe, as exhibited under the Creator's administration, or attested in the history of His creatures. So the natural sequence of the violation of moral law, operates mental alienation from the law and from its Author, and that corruption of nature which constitutes the spiritual death of the sinner. This occasions a liability to the infraction of natural laws, and to its corresponding damage or suffering. The positive curse is a superadded expression of the divine displeasure against sin. In the case of human beings, it comprises natural weakness, toil, weariness, decay and death, and may be regarded as a manifestation of the divine will, giving direction providentially to the certain results of moral evil, as those results are wrought out in the subordinate departments of the material creation. The strict penalty of violated moral law is that which may be termed the remediless and everlasting evil of the divine wrath, as inflicted on the incorrigible sinner in a future pun-

ishment and an endless hell. No part of this physical evil could have found introduction into the existing universe, had there been no sin.

The third kind of evil—which we have designated *alternative evil*, from the simple circumstance, that in the possibility of our conceptions, we may suppose it to have existed, had any other system of the universe been adopted essentially different from the present—embraces solely our ideas of what would or might have been either a defect or a redundancy in any such supposable economy. Imagine for a moment, that any other system had been chosen; we can easily conceive that there might have been left out of it the element of the creature's free agency. This must have been a defect, and as such an evil. Or there might have been engrafted into it severities even more than those which now actually exist, and this we may conceive to have been an excess such as would prove itself an evil. And so we might conceive numerous modifications of this alternative evil, which God has happily separated forever from the actually existing universe. But as this alternative evil, though immeasurably transcending in its possibilities all the realized evil ever existing or to exist in connection with the established universe, has been at the same time absolutely avoided, we may, in the present discussion, dismiss it from our further computation.

Such being the nature of evil in its three exhaustive aspects, it is impossible to conceive of any evil other than that which must be included under the one or the other of these primary forms. Whatever divisions may be made or terms employed to designate our notions of evil, it is evident that an ultimate analysis must trace each specific instance of evil back to one of the three conceptions which have now been specified. Having seen therefore, from the exposition already made, that the actual existence of the evil which afflicts the universe must of necessity in some manner complicate the agency of moral or spiritual beings in its origination and perpetuity, it remains to consider, as proposed, the method of this complication, both in respect of creatures, and especially of man, and also of the infinitely perfect Jehovah. This leads us to the second branch of the general discussion, which is—

II. The relation of creature agency to the actual evil of the universe, or a consideration of the manner in which angels and men are connected with it.

On this topic, our chief inquiry must be in reference to the blameworthiness or demerit of the relation in question, because it is evident, that on the proper determination of this point stands the whole weight of the responsibility of the introduction of evil into the universe. And though, as we shall hereafter see, we may not obtain a full solution of the difficulties of this subject, or discover a theodicy which is competent, in every imaginable aspect, to "vindicate the ways of God to man," we may at least show upon whom, in the existing system of the universe, the entire burden of the introduction of the evil which affects it, ought of right to rest, and does in fact repose.

Our proposition consequently is, that from the very nature of evil, and from the only possible ways in which it can be conceived to have arisen, the responsibility of its introduction into the universe lies alone upon the moral creatures of God. The blameworthiness of its existence rests solely with them. Accordingly it is clear, as a historic truth, that previous to the first sin of the first sinner, no trace of evil of any kind, was to be found in all the universe. But on the other hand, all that subsisted was good, and admirable, and to be desired. And if, in hypothesis, we take up our stand-point at any period antecedent to the first act of sin in the creature, and thence look over the stupendous fabric of the creation, we shall behold on every side, and without exception, displays of God's goodness, wisdom, and power. We shall see the countless monuments of beauty and grandeur, of peace and happiness, of perfection and glory, scattered throughout immensity, with nothing as yet existing to obscure the splendors or mar the mighty substance of this illimitable empire. We shall observe how, in this unperverted order of the vast economy, the tide of being rolls on majestically, and over all the realm of the unbounded monarchy, a sound of harmonies breaks forth so musical, so full of life and light and immortality, that not even the suspicion of evil shall enter upon this august panorama of unfallen things, as it sweeps around the throne of the eternal Father, from whose complaisent looks there ever flows a smile of approbation on all the creatures of His authorship.

Wherefore then, came evil? Whereat could it thrust itself into the goodly universe? We mark the free nature of angels and men, and we say at once, "there it crept in; there it got entrance, and there alone." Creature agency produced it, and the responsibility of its existence lies only on the sinner. The first appearance of evil

was an intrusion into the creation, in the form of sin—the disobedience and transgression of those "angels who kept not their first estate." Had this motion of moral evil never risen out of the free nature of moral beings, all actual evil must have been unknown to the universe. And here let us observe more particularly, in tracing the inception of that evil which has really accrued under the divine government, that in the first angel that sinned, both the temptation and the act of submission to it must have arisen purely with himself, as he found himself conditioned when he sinned. There could have been no antecedent evil; there was no external or surrounding evil. It is therefore evident that no form of evil could have assailed him from without. The source of it was in himself, and there it burst up. If it be suggested here that he must have been the subject of temptation presented by the objects around him, we have already shown that such temptation would be divested of the attribute of voluntariness, and therefore not properly an evil in itself. That angel was a moral or spiritual being—the subject of a law that was "holy, just and good." He was created perfect after his kind. His innocence was unexcepted, and his happiness complete. God had laid no necessity upon him that he should sin. He had placed him in no circumstances which ought of right to have coerced his act of sin. There he stood, in his original innocence, amid the most suitable corresponding external conditions, when lo! suddenly his heart changes, and the fearful lapse begins. Hard feelings and murmuring thoughts come swelling up, and black and damning purposes of rebellion go coursing in the soul. That was the inception of moral evil, and, so far as we are able to conceive of it at all, that was the manner of its introduction into the existing universe. That was the first transgression of the moral law, by a moral being voluntarily yielding himself upon the occasion of an involuntary temptation; and that was the first act of sin. It is plain, from the nature of the case, that no voluntary temptation at that time existed; for this would imply the presence of one who had sinned prior to the first sin, which is absurd. So that the first temptation must have involuntarily arisen with the first sinner, in view of the surrounding objects, and of his own condition as affected by them. But suppose that under the presence of the temptation so arising, it had gone no farther with him, moral evil would still have been shut out, because the being tempted in such a manner was not itself the carrying away of his innocence,

nor the subversion of his integrity, but rather became instead a conspicuous occasion for the additional display of virtue. But this temptation was, as a matter of fact, strangely followed by submission to an act of sin. The creature fully yielded. It was a motion of his free nature, and through that movement evil got a foothold into the great empire of God.

Now there was no need of opening this door; there was no necessity for such an occurrence—absolutely none. Nothing hitherto derived from God constrained it, but on the contrary, everything so derived put discountenance upon it. Nor was the finite reason less positively opposed to it, while firmness of resolution might forever have barred it out. Temptation might have pried with all its keys for the ingress of moral evil, but temptation would have been baffled at every turn, had only the creature set the watch, and with an unwavering will, looked stern and defiant on every beckoning attitude of solicitation. But creature agency betrayed its trust, and ever since the evil, which first then found a lodgment in the empire of Jehovah, has been perpetuated and extended in the free action of rebellious creatures. The conclusion is inevitable. The blameworthiness of evil lies wholly with God's sinful subjects. Their *relation* to it is one of responsibility and guilt. They have become thus fearfully complicated with it, and must bear the whole demerit of its introduction, as to the past—while, as to the future, they must be either wholly separated from it, or overwhelmed and ruined by it. Such being the connection of angels and men with existing evil, we proceed to consider the third general topic, which is—

III. The relation of the divine agency to the evil of the universe, or the sense in which God may be regarded as connected with it, and His designs respecting it.

From what has already been shown, it appears that the blameworthiness of evil belongs exclusively to those creatures who have sinned; and therefore we may assume, once for all, that the Deity holds no relationship to evil, in any sense derogatory to the infinite perfections of His character. He cannot be censured on account of its existence, because it is evident that He is not properly responsible for its introduction. But it may be said, if God had not chosen and actualized the present system, the existing evil might have been unknown. Of course, we answer; but then in that case, what we have termed the alternative evil must necessarily have existed, and that

may have been vastly greater than all actual evil. And moreover, if the principle be admitted, that a superior being should do absolutely nothing, because some inferior being, erring from the law of right, may take occasion to pervert the innocent works of that superior, and so to let in evil where before no evil existed, then there is a necessity which, according to the logical requisitions of the principle avowed, must compel the instant blotting out of the universal structure, and the subsidence of all its products into the primeval nothingness. "The King eternal, immortal and invisible," must sit alone upon a senseless throne, wielding a barren sceptre over the solitudes of a depopulated immensity. But from such a conclusion the understanding itself recoils, because the principle is false, and its fruition vicious.

If then, the connection of the divine agency with actual evil be wholly separated from the character of blameworthiness, it is essential to consider in what method this relation of Jehovah to the present evil actually subsists, and with what purposes He proceeds to administer His government in view of it. In the statement of our hypothesis upon this subject, we shall submit the question upon the following series of propositions:

1. God chose and actualized the present existing universe, foreknowing that the present evil would exist.

2. He purposed, in connection with all the other constituent phenomena of the universe, to permit it to exist—that is to say, foreseeing the liability to evil, as resulting from the constitution and development of the chosen system, He designed to tolerate its actual existence, in view of the manner in which it must arise, and of the possibilities that would result, in the order of nature, subsequent to the event of its actual occurrence.

3. He purposed, upon the factivity of its introduction under His government, either to overrule or to meet it with such positive constraints and penalties as to manifest forever to the universe its self-destructive nature. In this way, the evil of which He becomes the direct and positive Author is not moral evil, but that natural or constitutional evil which, in a compensatory system like that of th present universe, is seen to be necessary for the proper treatment of such moral evil as may spring from the free nature of moral subjects, and which therefore God does originate, in the two-fold aspect of His disciplinary and punitive governance.

4. In creating the present universe, God did not desire the actual evil with it, as in itself considered. Nor did He necessitate the evil which was first to mar the beautiful order of the creation, nor was it any part of the proper and essential motive which may be supposed to have led Him to the choice of the existing system.

5. God may be said to have ordained the present universe in spite of the actual evil which attends it, and because, for a final motive, of the vastly greater and more glorious objects which are apposite to the system itself, and can only be attained through its existence and operation.

6. In all this, it is not possible to perceive that there is anything traceable to the divine agency as its sole and proper moral cause, which is not manifestly "holy, just and good." Neither in the designs of God, nor in His overt action, can there be found anything which looks like the transcript of a vicious nature. The evil which He purposely permits, originates in the action of responsible creatures. The evil which He positively creates is, in the order of nature, but a consequence of that moral evil which began with the first sinner, and is therefore, so far from derogating from the divine character, only another though fearful element of the perfect vindication of Jehovah.

In further illustration of these positions, we are not to overlook the great primordial features of the divine manifestation exhibited in the present constitution of the universe. God has made bright and blessed worlds. He has made innocent and happy creatures. He has given them righteous laws. He has supplied all necessary provisions, and maintained all suitable vigilance for the realization of one unbroken order of beneficence and perfection, throughout the entire extent of His immense dominions. How or when therefore, did He desire the coming in of evil? How or when did He favor or foster it? How or when did He put forth one single manifestation of His character which offers the least shadow of evidence that He could authorize or sanction it? But it is alleged that God permitted sin in others. And what was this but permitting them to use their freedom as they would, even though He had built around them a wall of warning, and established every moral security against the contingency of their evil choice? To have done more than this for the prevention of evil, He must have arrested the moral action of His creatures, and totally obliterated their moral nature. The

question here becomes fundamental to the perpetuity of the moral universe. Shall the creatures of God retain their spiritual being and their free agency? Then must they, on the strictest principles of philosophy, be permitted to sin, if they will sin against light and law and eternal penalty. But it is alleged that God foreknew that these creatures would sin, when He made them. And what was this but the necessity of His omniscience? Can He be blamed for knowing all things? Or could He of right be estopped from the work of creation, by the knowledge of the coming evil? But God actually inflicts pain upon the sinner. He has prepared a place of everlasting torment for the finally incorrigible offender. And can He be blamed for this when, by reason of His character as Ruler and Judge, and of the executive office of supreme administration, He is bound to uphold and protect those interests and laws of the universe which sin assails? Under the divine government, hell is the philosophical result of sin, no less than the positive appointment of God as the retribution for violated law. The question of the divine relation to moral evil is reduced to this—that God's purpose is not to prevent its inception and specific progress within the limits which the moral freedom of His creatures furnishes—and that beyond this, He purposes to overrule or to punish.

But inasmuch as the punishment of the sinner is itself an evil, in the sense of suffering, it belongs to this discussion to show that so far from impeaching God's infinite perfections, the pain inflicted upon moral delinquents could not be withheld or averted upon any theory consistent with those perfections. It must be remembered that the divine agency is continually presented in a two-fold aspect—first in His work as the Author and Maker of the universe, and again in his office as the Upholder and Governor of the universe. In the character of Creator, God elected and ordained a system liable to evil, foreknowing that the evil would accrue. But the evil which He thus foreknew was moral evil—the sin of moral beings. In this remote sense only can the divine agency be said to be related to the origin of evil, since, if God had not created *anything*, moral evil could not have existed. But in that case, the alternative evil could not have been evaded; and this might have been a result far worse than that which has actually transpired. It is true this statement of the case at once brings forward, to the perplexity of our understanding, a formidable series of ulterior difficulties, which no theodicy

ever yet devised by the human intellect has proved capable of solving. Of these difficulties, the following may be taken as examples:

1. The question of the modification of the present universe from what it now is, to the extent of rendering the liability to evil impossible. Why could this not have been done? Is not the assumption gratuitous, that there is no middle ground between the existing universe with its contingent or actual evil, and no universe at all?

2. A suggestion from the revealed fact in the history of the moral universe, that some of God's moral creatures have never lost "their first estate," but have continued in the perpetual goodness of their spiritual life. The question is, why could not God have secured, upon the same or upon similar principles, an immunity from evil to all His moral subjects? Upon what basis of right reason can this difference in the condition of moral beings be explained? And still further, considering the doctrine of cause and effect in the strict method of philosophy, how could evil come to exist as an *effect* at all, while there was no prior evil *cause* to produce it? If like causes produce like effects, how is the enigma of this evident solecism to be resolved?

3. A derogation from the perfections of the Deity, apparently arising from the fact that *something* seems to exist in the present universe which was not desired by Him, which did not emanate from Him, which came *to be* in the face of all His wisdom, goodness and power, and which He must in some form or other contend with throughout the endless ages of eternity. This something is moral evil. It is the direct result of the action of moral beings, who are themselves the creatures and therefore the effects of God. This moral evil is consequently the effect of an effect, immediately traceable to the great First Cause; or if it have no first cause, it then must either spring from the second cause in independence of the first, in which case an antagonism is erected against God which He cannot remove—or it must exist without any cause whatever, that is be self-existent and therefore eternal and unchangeable. It would thus become an incident of immensity, like time and space, and hence be divested of its moral quality altogether. So that viewed in whatsoever light, the fact that it exists at all, when carried to its ultimate analysis, presents a problem which, in all the attempts of man to solve it, still remains as totally mysterious as ever.

4. A fourth difficulty is disclosed in the fact that every hypothesis yet constructed by human thought respecting this subject, turns out to be upon close inspection, that purest of all metaphysical inanities—*a petitio principii*—a "begging of the premises," and "reasoning in the circle." The divine perfection is what is sought to be proved, starting from the stand-point of existing evil. If God *could* prevent it, and *would* not, how is He infinitely good? If He *would* prevent it, but *could* not, how is He infinitely powerful? The final result of our rationality upon these questions is, that we take for granted what we propose to prove, and we prove our proposition by what we take for granted. A single formula contains it all—God is infinitely good, notwithstanding the existence of evil; and though evil exists, still God is infinitely good. This is the substance of all that the human intellect has yet contributed towards the final disposition of the subject in question. And indeed it seems incompetent to do more than this; for whatever hypothesis may be assumed, or whatever philosophy adopted, it appears to result from the relations of the finite to the infinite, that every step in the advance of human knowledge discloses further points of equal mystery, and gives rise to new questions which, though couched in other forms, still embody the same unsolved problem.

It is not therefore, our object in this discourse to attempt any explanation of the difficulties thus suggested It would be at best but a futile task. Many have tried it, and all have signally failed in the effort. The theories of Origen and of Swedenborg may stand as specimens of the whole. All therefore we are seeking to do, is to show how, or in what manner, the divine agency stands related to the present actual evil of the universe, and not to furnish the slightest satisfaction as to the ultimate reasons of such a complication. The *why* and the *wherefore* of the actual phenomena, and their philosophical reconciliation, are subjects lying wholly beyond the scope of our present rationality, and so we are unable to incorporate their elements into any authoritative demonstration.

But when once it is admitted that moral evil began with God's moral creatures in the way we have supposed, then it is comparatively easy to comprehend the fact that the divine agency is and should be connected with such evil, either for overrulement or punishment—and the further fact that in His office of Upholder and Governor of the universe, God does so treat it. And in so dealing

with it, He does often directly and positively create or cause to exist the corresponding physical evil. God does directly and positively decree and purpose to bring evil upon the offender. He does actually give to the earth its barrenness, to the winds and waves their fury, to war its havoc, to famine and pestilence their fangs, and to death its fearful sting. He does undoubtedly arm the elements with destructive energy, either as the superadded expression of His anger against sin, or as the required discipline of those whom He would reclaim, or finally to pay off in just and judicial retribution the score of the offender. In this clear and administrative sense, the Lord does create evil. So far as we can see, He would be blameworthy if He did not create it, for as the Supreme Ruler of the universe He is bound by every high consideration to the *punishment* of wrong-doing so soon as it is clearly demonstrated that its *overrulement* is impossible. In all this we discover at last the relation of Jehovah to the actual evil of the universe. It is a relation purely *permissive, reformatory,* or *punitive*—not one which as to Himself is condemnable or blameworthy.

Thus from the nature of evil as it actually exists, and the relations which God and His creatures hold to it, we must conclude that the beginning of actual evil is sin in the free nature of moral beings. We know nothing of actual evil prior to this, either in God or the universe. The existence of evil demands such a course on the part of the Deity as shall consist with the designs of His infinite perfections. This last necessity God fulfils, first with a view to the final extirpation of evil, and secondly to concentrate and confirm what may not be thus extirpated, within the limits of that place and condition which He has prepared for it, to remain forever.

If, then, there be any consistency or correctness in the view now presented, we see that the whole matter of evil in its origin is the intrusion into the universe of an unwelcome visitant. It came in by no positive purpose or personal act of Jehovah. On the contrary, His whole endeavor seems to be to eject it. The sinner would keep it in the system, corroding, convulsing, destroying. It becomes therefore, in the order of nature, a question for practical treatment. If it cannot be cured, it must be separated from so much of the moral universe as may be possible in the premises. The great Physician must either purge or cut it out. He must therefore countervail sin by suffering. And yet the physical evil so inflicted shall be none

the less bitter, because God is just in dispensing it. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." For He it is who can kindle the penal fire and awake the awful ministers of avenging justice—He it is who is roused and indignant upon every movement of sin, whose forbearance will not always last, and whose terrors once inflamed shall burn to the lowest hell—He it is who declares by the utter inviolability of His own emphatic oath, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." If sin then cannot be overruled, it must be met with punishment awful and remediless.

From the exposition now made in reference to the evil of the universe, we may derive some lessons of the gravest import to our present and everlasting well-being.

1. In the first place, we have the spectacle of a universe invaded by evil with which the Supreme Power of the government proceeds to grapple for its overthrow. In this great conflict; all the elements of the divine empire are intensified, and all its features brought out into bold relief. At every changing scene of the august exhibition, there is a further confirmation of the great fundamental truths of divine Revelation, and of those awful verities of our existence which every individual of the human race must meet. It is the movement of an empire whose Ruler is so sovereign, and whose issues so established, that there can be to the sinner nowhere either evasion or impunity. "Be sure your sin will find you out," is the fearful sentence which burns along the pathway of every flying offender. In one of two ultimate objects this inquest shall be laid. The every sin of every sinner shall hunt after him till he is discovered, either first, that he may repent and be restored; or if this shall fail, then secondly, that he may be consigned to the punishment that is everlasting and condign. This is the solemn ordinance of Heaven. The conditions of God's dealing with His sinful creatures are plainly stated. "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquities, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die." Again: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Therefore, will I judge you, every man according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." These are the principles of the divine administration, and to give them an everlasting power in a world of rebellious subjects, God has further made the crowning display of all His works in the Gospel of His Son Christ Jesus.

2. We have therefore a second impressive lesson in the plan of Redemption brought to light in the Scriptures. Upon this gracious economy God has gone forth actually to accomplish in our world all that can be done for the cessation of evil, up to the point beyond which the absolute destruction of the free nature of His moral creatures is all that would be left to be enacted. Up to this point, God has in the Gospel done everything possible in the premises to reform and deliver men from evil. He has established another covenant. He has initiated another dispensation. He has given to sinful men the written revelation of His will. He has provided an all-sufficient atonement for their sins. He has reprieved them throughout the entire period of this probationary life. He has upheld them by His providence, admonished them by His Word, instructed them by His Spirit, and in every way conditioned them upon terms most favorable to their recovery from the dominion of evil. He has afforded to them every facility, and bestowed upon them every blessing, of the glorious economy of salvation. He has given them His Son, "to die, the just for the unjust;" and with *Him*, also, God has provided the ordinances of the church and the means of grace. In manifold ways He conducts the ministration of mercy, while everywhere is uttered the solemn expostulation, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" And if, when the period of respite has expired, when at last it is discovered that the sinner has rejected all the overtures of the Gospel, and has resolutely persisted in the way and in the prosecution of evil, shall "it be thought a thing incredible" that God should abandon him to his own chosen ways, and "fill him with the fruit of his own doings?" It is this result to which the guilty must indeed be brought at last. And what a visitation of evil must that be which bears in its execution the fearful weight of a rejected Gospel, a despised Saviour, abused privileges, and squandered opportunities, and which shall roll the awful curse of "in-

dignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," over the human spirit forever!

3. There is one further serious lesson to be derived from this view of existing evil. We have already seen that evil was first originated by the action of God's moral subjects, and that by the same action it is now maintained. Since, then, it exists by creature agency, it is emphatically by the same agency that it must be made to cease. There is a way in which our world might be entirely separated from every vestige of the evil which afflicts it. Were everything now to cease from sin, and henceforth take a steady stand for God and holiness, this would finish the disorder, and finally efface from human conditions all that now makes up the curse and the catastrophe of the creation. What we have to do is just to retrace our steps, drag back the evil we have caused, and thrust it out again. If it is to go out at all, it must disappear by the same door through which it was brought in. If it is to go out at all, it must be made to vanish during the period of man's probation. It must go while yet repentance is possible, and pardon and peace may be had at the seat of that Sovereign Mercy over which there seems to shine a sentence of living comfort—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." It must go now, "in this accepted time, in this day of salvation." It must go when as yet God is putting forth His power to allay the terrors it has spread around, and to break its deadly spell, and to deliver its unhappy subjects from the captivity of their guilt.

Then, my fellow-men, there is in all this a pressure of obligation and of duty which lies on every one of us, so great as scarcely to be borne. If we have heard the voice of God calling us to our great work of "ceasing to do evil and learning to do well," how shall we contrive to postpone for a single hour the action that must be taken in our deliverance and salvation? How shall we still dwell upon our earthly projects, in ruinous indifference to all these mightier verities of the government of God? How shall we, in utter madness, still cleave to the great iniquity, and still swing the red scimitars of sin, reeking in the fresh-drawn blood of the Messiah, in the face of the omnipotent Jehovah? The day shall come when we must be hurried through the iron gateway, to behold, on the other side, the august phase of irreversible destiny. No present quietude, no earthly stays, shall hold us back. But as we ride insensible upon the eternal wave, the bitter truth may then first break upon us, that "sin, when

it is finished, bringeth forth death." And then shall the furies of an undone existence make each man to know the height and depth and the length and breadth of that evil which he has authorized and perpetuated, in spite of all the reclamations that flow from the Redeemer's Cross. Oh! then, while yet the catastrophe delays, and all the wretchedness of our estate may be disposed of in another way, let the summons of Jehovah be instantly obeyed. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Amen.

Thomas M. Clark.

THE IMPORTANT CHOICE.

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Choose you this day whom ye will serve.—*Joshua*, xxiv, 15.

The beginning of the Christian life is an act of choice, an exercise of the will. There are various elements which enter into that period of spiritual experience, which we denominate the season of conversion; it is marked by serious and earnest thought, deep and often agonizing emotion, sometimes by a change of opinion or of habit; but all this avails nothing, unless there be a decided and conclusive action of the will.

When, under the apostles' preaching, multitudes were pricked to the heart, they immediately cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" When Saul was arrested on his way to Damascus by a voice from heaven, the first symptom of his conversion was the question, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" When the hearts of the fishermen were impressed by the words of Jesus, they at once left their nets, and followed Him. They all felt that there was something to be done, and that promptly.

Now, it is wisely ordered, in reference to this, that the commencement of a Christian life should be distinguished by some public and ceremonial act. Compliance with the outward rite is supposed to be the indication of an inward exercise of the will, by which the individual dedicates himself to the service of the Lord. He now stands committed before angels and men, his enrolment in the army of Christ is made, and he must continue faithful unto the end, or meet the doom of an apostate. He must fight for Christ, or desert his ranks—he must courageously advance, or like a coward flee. He is bound by a sacramental oath; and if condemned, it will be out of his own mouth. It is then a serious thing to make open confession

of Christ. It should never be done, without careful counting of the cost. To come up to the altar, and there, with the hand laid upon the great sin-offering, to renounce the devil and all his works, consecrating ourselves soul and body to the Saviour, involves tremendous consequences. To do this, merely in compliance with a hereditary custom, thoughtlessly and carelessly—to do it, with no intelligent perception of the self-denials of a religious profession; or to do it, under a temporary, spasmodic feeling, and from sympathy with the general interest about us—is a grievous and damning-sin. If the ceremony have any meaning, it is awfully significant. It is the most solemn act which a creature can perform. It professedly separates us, thoroughly and eternally, from the world. Thenceforth, its "vain pomp and glory" are abjured, its sinful lusts renounced, its covetous desires disowned. We, and all that we have, belong to God.

I. The first question that we shall consider is this: What is essential in order to the actual exercise of the will in choosing the service of the Lord; or, in other words, what is the nature and process of a genuine conversion? In its every stage, it is the result of an operation of the Holy Ghost upon the heart. If we are convinced of our guilt, it is because "He is come, who will reprove the world of sin." If our minds are enlightened as to the things of heaven, it is because "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." If we die unto sin, it is because we experience the new birth of the Spirit. If we are sanctified, it is by the same Spirit. Every Christian grace implanted in us is a fruit of the Spirit; and by Him are we "sealed unto the day of redemption." There is not one independent movement of the soul, from the beginning to the end of the process of renewal. It is not capable of such a movement, and yet its every motion is voluntary and free. No other being chooses for us. The appeal is made to you personally—"choose *ye* this day whom ye will serve."

The Holy Ghost deals with us in the fullest recognition of our freedom. So far as our consciousness can reach, it is by the power of motives addressed to the understanding and the heart, that He effects the mighty change. There is heard the voice of argument: "Come now and let us reason together," saith the Lord. There is heard the voice of threatening: "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." There is heard the voice of en-

treaty: "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." There is heard the voice of encouragement: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." There is indeed some mysterious action of the divine upon the human mind, analogous to the exercise of creative power, which lies far back of our consciousness, and therefore cannot be subjected to analysis. How it is wrought, passes our comprehension. It is among the deep things of God. It need not, however, obscure our view of the formal process of renewal. It is impossible for us to define the essential nature of physical or vegetable life; how God creates, we cannot tell; but all the *processes* of life are open to our observation. We know all the conditions of its existence. We know where the seed must be planted, and how it must be sheltered; and we can foresee precisely the character of the plant, from our knowledge of the nature of the seed; but what it is which causes the seed to germinate at all, we cannot define. All life, in its inception, is an unfathomable mystery. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The effectual grace of God must move upon the soul, in order to our choosing to be His servants; to every one that will make this choice, the grace is given. There stand the two facts, alike certain and alike inexplicable. But there is no necessity for us to perplex ourselves with these mysteries, for all with which we are practically concerned is easily understood. The process of spiritual life we will now endeavor to exhibit.

The truth of the Gospel is first presented to the understanding. Grace and truth are always found in company, and both "come by Jesus Christ." We are called upon to "obey the truth." "Ye shall know the truth," says the Saviour, "and the truth shall make you free." Truth is the key which unlocks our dungeon door. Christ says of Himself, "I am the truth." The Holy Ghost is called "the Spirit of truth." Jesus prays that His people may be "sanctified through the truth." St. Paul describes his ministry as a "manifestation of the truth." Repentance is termed the "acknowledging of the truth." There is then, in every step of our renewal, a distinct recognition of man's *intellectual* nature. He is supposed to be capable of discerning the true from the false, and of being impressed by the truth. And in all this is involved the fact that he must exercise the power of choice, and be led to this choice by the influence of motive. His sin consists in this—that he has hitherto chosen wrong; he must now be brought to choose right.

And what is the truth with which the Holy Spirit plies the soul? Comprehensively, "the truth as it is in Jesus."

The mind is always busy upon something. Science may tax its energies, and so the man become well skilled in the wisdom of the world. Schemes of profit may exhaust its powers, and secure to the laborer abundant wealth. Dreams of vanity may weave themselves there, filling the vacuum with spider's webs. But there is one subject to which by nature we are always averse. That is the law of God. We dislike it, because it condemns us. It tells us that of ourselves, which we hate to hear. By it, is "the knowledge of sin." This is something of which we prefer to remain in ignorance. But the Spirit forces this subject upon our notice. He tells us the truth concerning ourselves. He forces us to acknowledge that it is the truth. And then there comes up from the depths of the soul the earnest cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone!"

This result effected, there appears upon the canvas another picture. Sinai vanishes, with its smoke and its thunderings; and Calvary shines forth, with its Cross and its redemption. The stern voice of vengeance sinks into a whisper of mercy. The clouds break, and the sun gleams upon the earth. The eye is anointed by the hand of faith, and we see Jesus interceding for us with an offended God. "Father, forgive them!" The words fall like music upon the ear. The law still condemns, but there is salvation by grace. This is in brief the truth which the Spirit reveals. Thus does "He take of the things of Christ, and show them to us." Until this is done, we remain utterly blind to our own condition, and hopelessly indifferent as to our salvation. From prudential motives, we may abstain from the grosser forms of sin—from the force of education, we may manifest an outward respect for religious observances; but not one step do we advance towards heaven. We are "without God and without hope." Our "feet stand in slippery places," and we hang upon the very brink of hell. "The truth is not in us." Conscience slumbers. The will is inert. Holy affections are dead. Selfishness rules the members and the mind. The heart is swollen with pride, cankered by avarice, corrupted through lust. I know that the sinner will deny this, for deceitfulness is one element of the heart's desperate wickedness. He does not understand his own errors. And, whenever the spirit flashes the light of heaven into the dark chambers of his soul, he stands aghast at the disclosures which are made. And

very often he is unwilling to take a second glance; but, with a sudden and convulsive effort, shuts the door of his heart against the light, preferring to be ignorant of what lies within.

And this leads us to our second observation—that, in a process of renewal, not only must truth be presented to the mind, but we must be induced to *dwell* upon truth, and give it time to do its work.

All important and permanent changes for the better in our moral condition must be the result of reflection. It is not generally on the instant that we perceive the full bearings of spiritual truth. Most men will carelessly acknowledge that they are sinners; but they do not consider what it is to be a sinner, in what a position it places them before God. His law must be comprehended in order to this, and the final judgment must be distinctly brought before their minds. They must *think* seriously and patiently. "When I consider, I am afraid." It requires a steady gaze to measure the long distance which separates the transgressor from his Maker. The catalogue of our sins is not to be read at a glance. Many of them we have forgotten, and they cannot be recalled without an effort. If they were all written in a book, and it were put into our hands, we should be shocked at its magnitude. Days and weeks would be needed for its perusal. And oh! how we should tremble as we turned it over, leaf by leaf, and found each page growing darker and darker. That will be the melancholy occupation of eternity, unless the record be blotted out in the blood of the Lamb. Neither can the depths of grace be penetrated in a moment. We can perhaps tell you nothing of the work of Christ which you did not know before; it is not information which you need; but, if you would take the simplest truth of the Gospel, and meditate upon it till it stands out in all its distinctness, it would come home to you with a power, and be invested with a meaning, which never before entered into your conception. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Those words are not new; the fact which they state is perfectly familiar to you, and it has perhaps never stirred a single pulsation in your breast; but if you would only give your thoughts to this truth; if you would consider that you have been redeemed by blood, the blood of Jesus Christ, and that this is cleansing blood; that, even though your soul be as red as crimson, crimson blood will wash it white as snow; if you would fix your attention upon these

things until you really apprehend them, you would rise up "a wiser and a better man."

The necessity of patient dwelling upon the truth is seen in this, that truth must shape itself into *motive*, before it can act upon the will. Now, a moral motive is the combined result of the action of conscience and affection, conscience showing what is right, and the affections urging us on to obedience. Truth enlightens the conscience and excites the affections. It does this just in proportion to the intensity with which it is apprehended. It is with the fire of burning thoughts that the Holy Ghost melts the iron obstinacy of the rebellious will. The sinner begins to think; it may be some domestic affliction that sends him to his closet—the revered and beloved parent, the sweet child, or the affectionate partner, dearer than all, has been laid away in the grave, and he flies from the world's uproar to weep in secret. The Spirit of God goes with him to his lonely chamber, and there holds solemn colloquy with his soul. His thoughts are led forward into eternity. He seems to see the spirit of the departed beckoning to him from the land of shadows. He remembers how soon he must follow. The question now begins to press achingly upon his heart, "Am I prepared for the change of worlds?" The attending angel unrolls before him the record of the past. He reads, and trembles as he reads. The world has had all his time and all his thoughts. God has been forgotten. The Saviour has been denied. "He has sown to the flesh, and must reap corruption." "What shall I do?" he cries in agony. "Pray!" answers the Holy Ghost. There comes a struggle. Those knees have not been wont to bend, before man or God. The words of prayer would sound strangely from those lips. Pride remonstrates; despair whispers, "It is too late!" Satan pleads for a respite: "It is time enough yet; tarry awhile!" He knows, wise and artful as he is, that the crisis has now come, and that the prey is slipping from his hands. Oh! *it is* a crisis, and heaven is poised upon the uncertain balance of the human will. "What shall I say to God?" asks the timid and convicted sinner. "Say whatever is in your heart!" replies the Holy Ghost. "Shall I be heard?" he asks again. There come crowding upon his mind the multiplied and earnest promises of God; and Jesus draws near, pointing to His wounds, and the shadow of the atoning cross seems to fall upon his chamber floor, and he sinks upon his knees,

and there is prayer in his heart—real, accepted prayer—even before the words are formed upon his lips. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" at length breaks from his burdened soul. He lays himself in faith at the Saviour's feet, giving all he has to Jesus, choosing Him as his everlasting portion, and the offering is accepted. Angels touch their harps to a loftier note over one more sinner who has repented.

And what has wrought this change? Instrumentally, and in the hands of the Holy Spirit, it has been the simple fact that the sinner was brought to earnest and intense reflection. "While he was musing, the fire burned." Truth was applied to his soul; circumstances led him to give special attention to the truth; gradually it found its way to his conscience and his affections; he turned his face in penitence to God, and on the instant the hand of reconciliation was stretched forth, and he was adopted as a son. His final act was one of choice—a free and cheerful acceptance of the Saviour; and had he stopped short of this, all the emotion which he experienced would have gradually subsided, and after a while he would have returned to the world, ten-fold more hardened than ever before.

II. The question to which I shall now direct your attention is this: What are the most prominent hindrances in the way of a final decision to consecrate the life to God?

And here I may remark, that, whatever they may be, they have a common origin and a common character. Their origin is in the natural depravity of the heart, and they are in themselves only its sinful issues. We may throw around the matter whatever appearance of palliation we can devise; we may say that we cannot come to a decision, because we wait for further light, or because the present conjuncture of circumstances does not favor it, or because we are so shocked at the inconsistencies of professed Christians, or because we do not feel the necessity of an immediate decision; these are only different forms in which the rebellion of the heart manifests itself. And yet it may be well to enter into certain particulars, and see how they operate to hinder a decision. One prominent difficulty grows out of the popular estimate of religion. The Gospel, in certain of its more general features, in our day, may be considered as having received the favorable verdict of the community. A degree of respect is paid to its outward forms by all who would maintain a reputable standing in society. Christianity is generally noticed with respect in our liter-

ature. It is not fashionable to profane the name of the Eternal God, or openly to trifle with the awful secrets of the dark prison-house of the damned. It is easy to distinguish, by the aspect of the city, the Lord's day from secular time. All the grosser vices, which our religion condemns, are also condemned by the civil law and by public opinion. Christianity, with its wonderful system of ethics, its sublime truths and glorious revelations, its disclosures of a judgment and an eternity—with its eventful history of persecutions and martyrdoms and heroes—with its long array of learned and powerful supporters—with its trophies of refinement and civilization, gathered wherever the world has been trodden in its triumphant march—with its noble temples, its impressive services, and its growing dominion—would certainly afford a strange subject for contemptuous ridicule. Even if I were an infidel, I would as soon think of sneering at the science of astronomy. If I believed that the Gospel were but an idle fable, I should find in it but little food for laughter. If I thought it all a delusion, when I saw the Gospel making the drunkard temperate, the thief honest, the lascivious pure, the passionate sober, the riotous calm, the avaricious liberal, the ambitious humble, the selfish open-handed, I should hesitate before I ridiculed such a faith. When I saw this religion lifting its genuine professors above the infected atmosphere of the world, tempering their minds in prosperity, and cheering them in adversity—when I saw the spirit of Christian faith and hope hovering like an angel of consolation around the dying bed of the believer, and lighting up with joy the dreary passage to the tomb—it would not be in my heart to interpose a single obstacle to hinder a fellow-creature from attaining its comforts and its blessings.

And yet it is the fact, that, in certain aspects, popular usages and opinions are directly opposed to the spirit and requirements of the Gospel. It must necessarily be so, in respect of what may be called the great central doctrines of Christianity, so long as Christ's Kingdom is not of this world. It cannot be expected that an individual will regard with favor and complacency any higher standard of godliness than he practices himself. A worldly community will not patronize a system which declares that, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And therefore it is, that even in circles where Christianity in its general features is treated with respect, there will be manifested the most bitter and resolute opposition to that doctrine which declares the vital and absolute necessity

of a radical change of heart and life. It is opposed and ridiculed, not so much theoretically as practically. There is no proper distinction made between the earnest and genuine convictions of the contrite heart and the wild outbreaks of the maddened enthusiast. The awakened emotion is ascribed to melancholy, or caprice, or some idiosyncrasy, which is to be removed by secular employment and relaxation; and various influences, direct and indirect, are brought to bear upon the convicted sinner, to divert his thoughts, and enkindle his pride, and lead away his mind from the things of eternity. These efforts too often prove successful, and, after a few faint struggles, the voice of conscience is silenced, and the world resumes its sway.

Another class of hindrances grows out of peculiar habits and temptations connected with our secular occupation. Whatever that may be, it is liable to interpose special obstructions in the way of a final and decisive consecration of the heart to God.

It is hard for the man who is absorbed in any secular pursuit, tasking his energies in the pursuit of wealth, excited to-day by a favorable turn of fortune, and depressed to-morrow by the prospect of reverses, to give his mind long enough and intently enough to the subject of religion to reach a fixed decision. In the silent hour of the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, solemn meditations may possess his soul, and the question sorely agitate him, "What shall it profit me if I gain the whole world?" but, with the excitement of the morning, and amid the bustle of returning day, all these things are forgotten. He does not actually resolve, finally and forever, to banish the subject from consideration; he acknowledges its importance; he hopes to make his peace with God before he leaves the world; he is not satisfied with his condition, but earthly cares have preoccupied his mind; and so year after year slips by, and the will lies dormant. He comes to no decision, and at last he giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

So it is with the ambitious man, whose hopes are suspended upon the people's favor, who is busily studying how to win the public ear, and secure for himself the place of power. He must scheme and counter-scheme, watch lynx-eyed and incessantly his opponent's movements; he breathes a tainted atmosphere; the lines of truth and falsehood become strangely blended; he learns to check the honest expression of his mind, and trains himself to utter whatever policy may dictate. In some hour of disappointment, when he is disgusted with the

honors of the world, and loathing its empty promises, the Spirit of God may stand before the door of his soul, and hold up to his view an incorruptible crown, reserved in heaven for those who love the Saviour. He is prompted to secure that crown, and to seek the honor which cometh from God. Angels gather around him, to second these holy desires. Great truths, which he had long forgotten, crowd upon his mind. The frozen surface of his heart begins to melt. The will, which had seemed so rigid and immovable, vibrates faintly and tremulously. But at this critical moment, there is a change in the aspect of earthly fortune. The long-coveted prize, which had been given up in despair, is suddenly laid at his feet. A thousand voices shout the name of the successful statesman with vociferous and hearty acclamation. His hand insensibly closes upon the wand of power. With a spontaneous joy, he bows his head to receive the laurel, and God is thenceforth forgotten.

And there is the scholar, shut out from the busy excitements of life, careless of wealth, and not over-anxious for honor, "whose mind to him a kingdom is." Are there any peculiar hindrances in the way of choosing God's service, likely to grow out of his condition? He has a cultivated understanding, ability to comprehend, and leisure to digest the truth; "His labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity." He has learned to fortify himself by the power of philosophy—is not this a good stepping-stone to religion? Alas! it is made a substitute for the Gospel; and when the Spirit of God pleads with his soul, he falls back behind the stony entrenchments of this philosophy, and so cuts off all communion between his soul and heaven.

Another difficulty in our way arises out of the existence of some secret and cherished idol, which must be sacrificed when the soul devotes itself to God. There is comparatively little difficulty in making the surrender which Christ requires, until this favorite possession is touched. Then the nerves quiver, and the heart draws back from Jesus. The sinner shrinks from the threatened laceration. He cannot bear the torture of the knife. He trembles at the thought of his alienation from God; he feels his sinfulness; he longs for peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost; he is impelled by a power that is almost irresistible to go and lay his head upon the Saviour's breast, and plead with Him to be pardoned and to be loved; and yet he is held back—for if he goes, he must leave the object of

his idolatry behind, and bid farewell to it forever. He reaches the very threshold of the kingdom; another step, and the dividing line would be passed; but there lies in his way one rock of offence over which he stumbles, and the gate of heaven is not attained.

Now, it is this fond idol, which has been to him in the place of God, for his best affections have centred there; his will has prostrated itself before this shrine. And the whole question of his salvation turns upon his readiness to sacrifice this particular object of his love. It may be considered as the concrete of his inward depravity. It may have its root in the passion of avarice or ambition or sensuality, or it may be grounded upon some nobler affection; it does not matter what it is, so long as it sunders the creature from God. The devotion rendered to it is a robbery of God, giving to another what belongs to Him.

There is still another impediment which often stands in the sinner's way; and that is, the fact that he is called to mark the beginning of his Christian life by a public and formal dedication of himself to God. After all other difficulties are supposed to be surmounted, here the individual hesitates. It seems a formidable thing to come out before the world, and renounce the principles by which life has thus far been guided. It is an open confession of past unfaithfulness. It may sunder long-established ties of friendship. It may expose you to ridicule and reproach. It will bring you into connection with those whose sympathies and associations are very diverse from your own. It is an assumption of new responsibilities. It lays you under peculiar restrictions. It exposes you to a scrutiny which otherwise would be avoided. The mark of Christ will now be upon you, and you will be expected to walk answerably to your Christian calling. You must hereafter be seen no more in the place of vain amusement and noisy revelry. Your speech must be seasoned with salt, and no profane or careless words must proceed out of your mouth. Your unruly temper must be brought into subjection, and railing must no more be answered with railing. Your fellow-creatures, in whatever relations they may stand to you, must be treated according to the Christian rule of love. You must no longer be over eager after earthly gain, but hold all your possessions as subject to the will of the Lord. To take the final step which involves all these consequences, and pledges you to such a life, is indeed a serious thing. Your word, once passed, can never be retracted. There is

but one door by which you can leave the church of Christ, after you once enter the enclosure, and over that is written, "anathema—maranatha!"

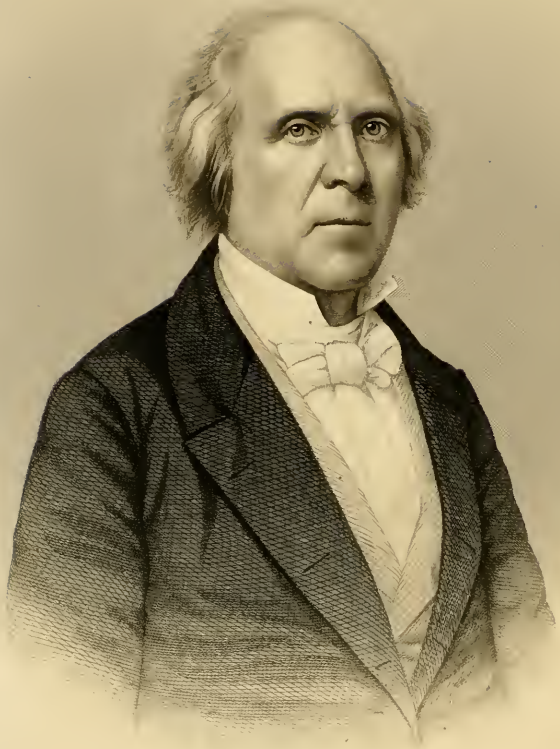
Various and serious, then, are the difficulties which tend to hold you back from a decision. We are not disposed to evade or undervalue them. We would prefer that you should distinctly see all that must be encountered in choosing the service of God. At the same time, we would remind you that none of these difficulties are insurmountable. Others have fought their way through all the obstructions of Satan to eternal life, and you may do the same. And just remember what is to be determined by your decision. Consider seriously and patiently the dreadful alternative, if you allow anything to keep you at a distance from the Saviour.

What is the interest here at stake? *Your salvation.* Salvation—from what? From sin, with all its debasing corruptions, its grinding tyranny, its remorseful pains, its debilitating influences, and its destructive results. Your present well-being is here involved. Unchecked by grace, that incipient lust may ripen into riotous and ruinous excess, and the drunkard's living shame or the suicide's inglorious grave may be your miserable heritage. The youth who finds salvation in Christ, and is early sanctified of the Spirit, is safe. Who else can be safe in such a world as this, and with such hearts as these lodged within us?

But is this all? Is there no other salvation than this?

> "There is a death whose pang
> Outlasts the fleeting breath."

There is a doom which reaches both soul and body, whose hopelessness and dreariness no word of ours can picture; and salvation is deliverance from this doom, rescue from this eternal death. When, therefore, you are repelled from what you feel to be your duty by thinking of the hindrances which obstruct you, and the sacrifices which must be made, remember also what lies beyond. And let the thought of a heaven to be gained nerve your arm with strength, and inspirit you for the contest.



Wm. A. Smith

THE KNOWLEDGE OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

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For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.—*Romans*, viii, 15, 16.

I. I propose to show that it is the privilege of every subject of grace, under the Gospel, *to know that he is a child of God;* that this experience, only, can keep us in immediate contact with the atonement; and that this doctrine is in perfect harmony with the intellectual nature of man and the facts of Christian experience.

It is not necessary, in order to verify this position, that all the Scriptures bearing on the subject be examined. Attention will be chiefly directed to the language of Paul.

"*Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*" What does the Apostle mean by "*the spirit of bondage,*" and by "*the spirit of adoption?*" It is assumed that they were understood by those to whom they were first addressed, and that, in themselves, they define opposite mental states. "Ye were once in a state of bondage," says Paul; ye have not relapsed into that state, but ye are now in the contrary or opposite state. Some, who interpret Scripture with a view to discredit a spiritual in favor of what they call a rational religion, assert that the genius of the Law and the genius of the Gospel are here personified. The natural tendency of the law, in its operations upon the mind of one who has violated its provisions, being to produce a servile fear of God, its operation and effects may be called the spirit of bondage; and the tendency of the

Gospel being to quiet the fears which the threatenings of the law do actually awaken, this operation and effect may be called the spirit of adoption. But this interpretation, I think, may be safely ignored, as far short of the high import of the spiritual teaching of the Apostle, for no man deferred to the law more than he. He relied implicitly upon his obedience to both the moral and ceremonial law, as affording him the only ground of salvation. "*As touching the law,*" says he, "*I was blameless.*" Whatever, then, may be the natural operation of the law upon a mind which looks not to it merely as a rule of life, but to his obedience to it as the procuring cause of salvation, we may expect to see exemplified in the early history of Paul. What, then, was the effect upon him? Was he a subject of servile fear? Far from it. For, speaking (Romans, vii, 9) of that period in his history when he was "*without the law,*" in that spiritual import which gives it a direct awakening effect, he says of himself, "*I was alive,*" in that state; I had no idea of my sin and danger. With the straight edge of the law lying to my crooked path, I was nevertheless ignorant of the obliquities of my course! I really thought I was doing God service, while I was actually shedding innocent blood, in utter contempt of His authority! "But *when the commandment came,* I died"—that is, "when my pure reason was so enlightened by the Holy Spirit, whose office it is '*to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come,*' that I had a clear perception and just discrimination of the nature and relations of moral law to my heart and conduct, I at once saw and felt that I was a ruined sinner, hastening on to judgment without a single ray of hope. '*I died,*' to all the former quiet of my mind. I saw that I was really dead, in the eye of the law, and only awaited the act of the executioner to complete my ruin." Hence the bitter lament: "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" Here was slavish fear, indeed—the bondage of a chain, which, his own unhappy and fruitless experience taught him, no human power could break.

Now, we know that the law is not defective in its own nature. It is "*through the flesh*" only that it is "*weak.*" In itself, it is *holy, just, and good.* Here, then, is an effect, in the case of Paul, not resulting from the nature of the law, for that remained the same that it was before his awakening—holy *then,* and holy *now;* nor yet resulting from the essential nature of mind, for Paul's mind remained

the same also; but, as the context shows, an effect resulting from the direct operation of the Holy Spirit—so enlightening, and thereby quickening his *pure reason*—the faculty by which he perceives real abstract truth, and discovers its relations to himself—that he perceives and acknowledges his lost and ruined condition, and *feels* all the force of this *new belief*.

Let it be observed, that there remains to man, since his fall, in common with his fellow animals, the capacity to take in all ideas which come through his physical senses. Besides this, there is that measure of understanding, or capacity to perceive and assent to the nature and relations of *these ideas* to himself and the business of life, which is inseparable from the existence of the pure reason, and which makes him, though a *fallen*, still a *rational, being*. But because his *pure reason* is no longer in immediate contact with the Holy Spirit, as it was before his fall, he has, by nature, no clear perception of *moral good, moral beauty, and moral truth*, (our classification of all pure abstract moral ideas,) and, at best, only a dim, shadowy outline of these ideas. Hence he does not discriminate their relations to himself, and their claims upon him. Hence he does not believe the teachings of the law, that he is a transgressor, and liable to death. And as he does not believe *this*, he does not (nor can he) feel the obligations of this belief. The feeling of the *ought* or the *ought not* is not present—that is, he has no conscience about it. Hence his will is powerless, touching these matters, though capacitated for freedom, because it is not supplied with the antecedent feeling of obligation, which is the necessary condition of volition, or condition of choosing by election—a condition inherent in an act of moral freedom. For, as the presence of two individuals, one with the other, is a necessary condition of their holding a personal conversation, while at the same time, this condition, being supplied, does not *compel* the conversation they hold with each other; so the *feeling of obligation* to the truth believed (conscience) is a necessary condition of an act of volition, or an act *electing* to be governed by this obligation; whilst at the same time, this condition, being supplied, (conscience being present,) does no more *compel* the volition than, in the former case, the presence of the parties compels the conversation. If this were not so, it could not be said with truth, in any sense, that man was a free and accountable being. But, although it is true that he is constituted a free being in his essential mental nature, it is still true that, in his

entirely fallen state, he is as powerless in effecting his recovery as if he were not constituted for mental freedom; because, in his fallen state, he is so far deprived of the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit, that he cannot so clearly perceive the nature and claims of the moral law, as to be able to believe them. Hence, he cannot feel his obligations to obey them, and therefore cannot *elect* (*choose, with power not to choose*) to be governed by them. If he does not so elect, (and he cannot,) he performs no act in regard to them, and cannot be saved as a rational being.

No marvel, then, that (legal) Paul, who was but partially raised from the ruins of the fall, should stumble, with the lamp of truth before him. With a Jewish Bible in his hand, he was yet a most flagrant transgressor, and wholly ignorant of the fact—evidently because he did not see and admit the claims of the moral law—"*because they, seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.*" (See Matthew, xiii, 13, and Romans, vii, 7—11.) Paul did not see that obedience to the ceremonial was not obedience to the moral law; nor was it an atonement for the failure!

But God has not left man in this entirely helpless state. Christ has certainly redeemed him from this dreadful curse of the law of Paradise, and placed him in a salvable state! For "*He is the Light of the world—the Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.*" We need not stay to inquire into the philosophy of atonement. We rely on the great Bible truth, that the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ were accepted in the jurisprudence of Heaven, on behalf of rebellious man. God can now show mercy to man, with due regard to the claims of all on earth and in heaven, which before He could not do. (Romans, iii, 26.) The great Mediator becomes the Light of the world; for He not only is the author of those great facts which embody the truths of revelation, but also enlightens us by the *gift of the Holy Spirit.* The great abstract ideas of revelation will avail nothing to man, unless he shall see and understand them. The ideas he gets through the senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling, form in him, as a mere fallen being, the chief basis of his mental operations. These ideas, (external knowledge,) and the use which his mind makes of them, constitute the *carnal* or *fleshly* mind—(Romans, viii, 6, 7)—*carnal*, because the source of these ideas is the *senses*, and the end of all the uses to which the mind puts these ideas is the gratification of these

bodily senses. These things being so, in his fallen state, this carnal mind is in the ascendant, and the *pure reason or spiritual mind*—the power by which it was designed he should appreciate pure abstract ideas, such as do not in any wise come through his senses—is subordinate. Hence, he is strictly a selfish being, a being seeking the gratification of his sensual nature. The claims of God as a holy and just being, the claims of his own spiritual nature, and similar claims of his fellow men, are not perceived, and hence cannot be appreciated by him. The result we see in the case of (legal) Paul.

But the remedy of atonement is direct. The Spirit—that Holy Spirit which abandoned him in the moment of his great transgression—is restored to him in redemption; and, *in a measure*, in the *moment* of that redemption. For the same atonement which announced the truth, "*the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*," conferred the gift of the Spirit upon the first pair. Their reason was enlightened. They then perceived the broad spiritual truths contained in the promise, and, we may charitably hope, were saved by faith in Christ, who was the essence of that promise. But this promise, together with this gift of the Holy Spirit, was not to Adam alone, but to all his posterity. And all the thousands, in every age, savage as well as civilized, who have gone to heaven, were saved by some of the forms of abstract truth furnished by the atonement, such as were appropriate to the dispensation under which the providence of God placed them, and by such influence of the Holy Spirit as was necessary to enable them to perceive and appreciate the claims of these truths. Hence they were saved by the atonement of Christ, the only name given under heaven whereby sinners can be saved.

This atonement is unconditional, up to a certain limit; but beyond that limit, in the case of every *accountable* being, it is wholly conditional. The benefits of atonement, in the form of such truths as are appropriate to his dispensation, and that measure of the Holy Spirit necessary to enable him to appreciate the claims of these truths, and thereby awaken in him a *conscience* in regard to them, or feeling of obligation to choose them and be governed by them, are unconditionally given. All the benefits of atonement beyond these limits are conditionally given.

The great condition which runs through the whole scheme of human redemption is, not *belief* or *repentance*, in the common acceptation of it, but *faith*, and such *faith* as *implies* belief; and *that*

faith in Christ *directly* in the case of all those to whom He is preached, and faith *in Christ indirectly*, because constructively, in the case of all those to whom He is not preached. *Faith*, then, is the great Gospel condition. I say, not mere *belief*, or mere repentance, however sincere, *but faith in Christ.*

Belief and *faith* are sometimes used interchangeably in the Scriptures. *Belief* is also sometimes used to express both faith and belief, but *faith* is rarely ever used for mere *belief.* They are terms, however, which differ widely from each other in meaning. One is an act of the *judgment;* the other is an act of the *will.* No two mental states are more distinctly marked than these. *Belief* is the *assent of the judgment* that the truths presented are truths, and the assent of the judgment to the *claims* of these truths. Such belief in the case of any truth whatever, claiming to control our action, is always followed by *conscience*, or the feeling of obligation to obey. This is its uniform consequent.

The case in which the judgment assents fully to the claims of truth, and yet the man feels no obligation to obey, would argue an abnormal state of mind, the result of either derangement, or the wasting effects of that form of grace abused, in which a man ultimately "*believes a lie, that he may be damned.*" But I speak of the operations of the mind in its normal state. The man who stops in this mere belief and its effects, whether he be savage or civilized, stops short of salvation.

Now faith, indeed, *implies* all this. It could not arise without these antecedent mental states. But, in itself, it is very different from each of these states. It is an act of the *will.* It is *volition*—volition in the form of *choice, trust,* or *reliance.* Any truth whatever, assented to by the understanding, is a truth *believed.* If it be a moral truth, it is uniformly followed by the feeling of obligation to obey. This feeling furnishes an occasion for faith. When the will puts forth a volition, choosing or electing to obey *this feeling,* instead of some *antagonistic feeling,* it exercises an act of faith or trust in the truth believed.

Therefore Socrates, and all like him, to whom Christ was never preached, if saved, (as I suppose them to be,) were saved by a faith implying this antecedent belief in truths peculiar to the dispensation under which God placed them, and *constructively,* as already remarked, by faith *in Christ.* And so of Paul; he was saved by faith—

faith directly in Christ. That Christ is the Saviour of sinners was, as it still is, the great truth of the dispensation under which he lived. He not only believed this great truth, but *trusted* in it, by electing to obey all the obligations its belief imposed, and hence was saved directly by faith in Christ.

Again I say, *by faith in Christ*, and not *merely* by *repentance*. I confess to much painful misgiving of mind as to the teaching of the present day on the subject of salvation by *repentance and faith!* According to much that is heard from the pulpit, a man has but little use for *belief*, and certainly *none* for faith, and especially *faith in Christ*, until, by some means, he becomes a true penitent, earnestly seeking salvation! I dissent from all this. The teachers in question are sentimentally right, no doubt; but they strangely err in much they say, whether we test them by the standards of Methodism, the teachings of the Bible, or the facts of mental nature.

The only true ground seems to me to be this: We are saved by faith, and *faith alone in Christ*, from first to last. We have to do only with saving faith. No faith is saving but faith in Christ. Nothing less than this can bring a carnal sinner into the state of *true* repentance, and this same saving faith—not another faith, or another degree of it, or anything of the kind, but this *same saving faith in Christ*—is necessary to bring him from that state of bondage indicated by repentance, into a state of acceptance with God. Let us analyze the mental process in this work.

Here is a carnal man, not so apparently a disbeliever as that he is no believer. This great truth, the sum of all Bible truth, is brought, no matter by what agency, before his mind, namely: "*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Now, observe: He is carnal, living for the gratification of his senses only; and therefore, living regardless of the will of God, his rightful sovereign, he is a lost sinner, hastening to eternal death. Upon these facts turns the manifestation of the great love here proclaimed. Of course, his mind, in the nature of things, must cognize these facts, before he can be prepared to appreciate, in the least degree, the benefits of this gracious offer. Now, we know that repentance is a necessity in salvation; that is, he must *fixedly—sincerely*, if you like the term better—in the purposes of his mind, turn away from his sins, and turn to God; for to do the one is to do the

other. Unless he thus repent, he will surely perish, because, in that case, he can never participate in the benefits of this gift. But wedded to sin, as he is, by affinity and by habit, is it even conceivable that he ever *can* (not to say *will*) put forth a fixed volition or determination to sin no more, unless his judgment fully assent to or believe the great truths which define his present state, and his *conscience* be fully awakened, deeply to feel his obligations to obey all the duties to which the belief of these truths commits him? Impossible, in the very nature of things!

He then must believe, *first*, that he is a sinner against an infinitely just and holy God; *secondly*, that sin, in itself, is exceedingly evil, most justly exposing him to the present displeasure and the final judgment of Almighty God; and *thirdly*, he must so believe these truths, personal to himself, that his *conscience* deeply feels the obligation under which the belief of these truths personally lays him. This last, we know, will always be in the ratio in which the former two are believed. If the first and second are fully believed—believed without doubting—the obligations of conscience touching these points will be fully felt. If they are not so felt, I say it is not possible that a selfish being, wedded to sin, can put forth a volition to forsake it; but when they are so felt, the great condition is supplied to the *will*, by which it *may* put forth the volition to be governed by these *obligations*—that is, forsake his sins; and yet, so as not to *compel* the *will* to this act of volition, as the philosophy of Edwards vainly teaches.

Here the question arises, How is he *so* to believe these personal facts as to produce the *conscience* necessary to such a mental act of elective choice, or trust, in the truths believed, as constitutes a fixed purpose to forsake sin? This question is raised to meet one point only. That this man's mind could never rise, unaided, to those purely abstract ideas—that the agency of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to illuminate his reason, and thereby crane up his judgment, by bringing these high abstractions within the compass of his fallen capacity—are cardinal points in our theology, and, as between myself and the reader, are assumed to be understood and admitted. But when we undertake to induce this belief, which it is the design of all preaching to do, by and with the aid of the Holy Spirit, which we suppose to be supplied, how shall either *we* or the *Holy Spirit*, or both together, effect the proposed design, in harmony with the laws

of mind? Why, certainly, by presenting these facts as they really are. But what are these facts? They are, that sin in itself is so exceedingly *evil*, that in the mind of the all-wise God, who could not fail to know the truth in this case, nothing but the incarnation of His only-begotten Son, and that life of extreme suffering, and that vicarious death, recorded of Him in the Bible, could make it possible for Him to forgive and save a guilty sinner, without the grossest injustice to all His unsinning family, whether on earth or in heaven! Yet still, great as were the difficulties to be overcome—perilous as was the sacrifice—so great was His love to a world of sinners, that He did not hesitate—He passed at once all those bounds, and in the fullness of His love *He gave His only-begotten Son!* Now, I say, these are the *facts*, and that *no man ever did*, and that no man *ever can, assent*, in his judgment, to the *real evil of sin*, until he perceives and *assents* to these truths; or, in other words, until he believes in the atonement of Christ! It matters little who is the agent, able to produce in a man the belief that he is a sinner, so as to bring about *true repentance*—he can never succeed, if he leave out the Cross of Christ! His own heart may glow as he describes the astonishing goodness of God in the wise arrangements of nature, the singular adjustments of providence, the amazing provisions of grace. Poets may sing of these themes, as they have done, and the heart may wail under the sweet tones of their lyre, but all this is short of our mark! We would cause the mind to *assent* to the fact, that *sin* is not the mere *imprudent, unwise* thing, these ideas show it to be, but that, *in itself*, it is *the real damning evil* the Scriptures represent it to be! But the mind *will* not, the mind *cannot*, yield its *assent* to *this* fact, until it sees the fact; and this fact is nowhere to be seen, in the whole compass of human thinking, *but in the infinite love of God, as displayed in the atonement by Christ!* The preacher who delays—as many, I fear, actually do—to offer Christ until he has need to comfort a desponding penitent, has misinterpreted an important part of his message! He needs the atonement, the Cross—as much to *make* men penitents, as to comfort them when they are penitent.

Another question arises here: Is this full *assent* or belief in the true evil of sin producing, as it cannot fail to do, that deep feeling of obligation we call conscience, whose voice in this case is, "*I ought* to hate sin—*I ought* to turn from it and unto God"—accompanied by more or less of regret, sorrow, remorse, and the like—is *this re-*

pentance, or does it necessarily result in repentance? I answer, *No!* There is no *faith* in it. As yet, it is mere *belief*—correct belief, it is true, because it embodies the atonement; and both in itself, and in the effects it produces—an enlightened conscience—it supplies an indispensable condition of *repentance.* But because there is yet *no* faith, the true saving element, so far as the voluntary agency of man is concerned, is still wanting. Now, *faith* is the act of the *will*—not the mere act of the judgment, as is *belief*, but the act of the *will*, a volition, choosing, consenting to or trusting in, (take which you please,) by an act of *election*, (that is, choosing with liberty not to choose—the only true idea of freedom,) the *truths assented to*, with *all* the obligations of conscience. Until this is done, it is clear, there is no turning from sin—no fixed purpose (for *this* only is the purpose) to turn from sin, and hence no repentance—for nothing else but this fixed purpose to turn from sin and unto God is repentance.

But can a man go so far as to believe and feel all the obligations of conscience, and still stop short of repentance? Undoubtedly he can, unless he be a mere machine, as well as a fallen being. Having yielded the assent of his judgment to truths, which another displayed to his mind—an assent which, in given circumstances, he could not prevent—and having *felt* the obligations of that conscience, which these admitted truths awakened by a law of his mind equally beyond his control: now, if he must necessarily go forward and give the consent of his will—that is, exercise *faith*—then is he a mere machine, and no more an accountable being than is the clock which strikes the hour it was set to strike! But who dare affirm this? None! Then I offend none in asserting its contradictory.

Very little observation of mental states will exemplify these views. Numerous examples teach us that men perceive the whole truth relating to them as sinners, displayed in the atonement; that they feel the monitions of conscience touching these truths—aye! hear its thunder tones, as the roar of the cataract of death, and feel their souls within to be rocking as a ship in a tempest; and yet it is distinctly traceable, that there underlies all these necessary *beliefs*, and their consequent *emotions*, a stubborn, unyielding *will*, which (secretly) refuses to submit, and chooses the present gratification of sense, with only the vague and indefinite purpose, that "at *a convenient season*" they will yield the obedience now so urgently demanded. The Holy Spirit is grieved. He withdraws from the mind. The active

assent of the judgment is abated. The feelings of obligation subside, and the thoughts soon take the smooth current of business or of pleasure, as before. He *may* return again and again, but if with the same fruitless effect, He leaves to return no more; and the necessity which the man's own folly has brought upon him, to believe a lie, and be damned, is all that awaits him!

But if, on the other hand, he does what he is abundantly able to do, by all these supplied conditions of volitive action—that is, if he exercise faith in the truths he has been made to believe and feel in the form of conscience—he puts forth an act of volition, he chooses to adopt those truths, to rely on them, and to be governed by the obligations of conscience in regard to them. That is, he resolves to forsake his sins, and to consecrate himself to God, and he is therefore, on the ground of this fact alone, *a true penitent.*

Now, it is precisely at this point that the state of *bondage,* brought to view in our text, begins. That is, when he has both *belief* and *faith* in the broad doctrine of atonement by Christ, so far as it applies to him as an *unrepentant* sinner, a consciousness of *his bondage* to sin commences. He has been all his life in this *bondage,* but he was never conscious of the fact until *now.* Experience makes him conscious. "*To will*" (to purpose) "*is present with him.*" (Acts, vii, 18.) His resolution is decided to put away his sins, and to live a life of pure devotion to God. He enters upon his new career with confidence of success. When stung by remorse of conscience, that he had lived regardless of those truths he now so clearly believes, he naturally thought it only remained for him to determine to obey the obligations of these truths, and he would at once place himself right before God! But alas, how disappointed! He has deliberately elected (an act of *faith*) to obey all these obligations. He is honest. He does not for a moment doubt this. Still his mind cleaves, of course, to existing beliefs: "God is just. I *deserve* no mercy!" For a time he wonders that no change has followed his decision. But so it is; he feels himself to be the same ungrateful sinner as before! He thinks—he reasons! He trembles and prays! Still no change comes. "God is just. God is angry with me. I deserve it all." As before, conscience stung him with these thoughts; so still these ideas prevail in his mind, no less than before his resolution was taken. He casts about for reasons why there is no change. He falls naturally upon the fallacy that he does not *feel* enough!

He tries to feel more. But as no effect follows his oft-repeated efforts, he falls at once into the error—"I do not feel at all!" He doubts his belief—doubts, it may be, *all belief*—doubts his sincerity! *Fear* entered largely as an element in that remorse of conscience which first sprung from his belief of the great fact of atonement. The natural demands made by this belief, that he obey the obligations of conscience, afforded him hope that obedience would be followed by immediate relief. But he has tried it, and utterly failed! His fears revive. They rise upon him like an armed man! His mind verges on despair! "*O wretched man that I am!* what shall I do!" This is *bondage* to sin, *bondage* to sin and to fear, indeed!

This mental state is subject to great modifications. All true penitents do not by any means realize the same type of emotion. In some, the feeling resulting from the same beliefs is far more intense than in others. One, highly excitable in temperament, will suffer much more acutely from the same mental causes, than another who is less so. And then, again, education and general habits of thought and belief will go far to modify these results. One, educated from early life in correct views of the atonement, and whose habits of thought make him speculatively familiar with its distinctive features, will not be so liable to despair (whatever his temperament may be) as another, whose views are necessarily limited by those features only of atonement which define his *condition* as a sinner—which, to a great extent, is necessarily the case with a mind without antecedent instruction. In the first case, however, other features of atonement would frequently occur to his mind, and better sustain his hope—he would fear, but not without hope. But however this may be, the mental state of every *true* but unpardoned penitent is one of *bondage* to sin and *bondage* to fear!

Now, if we trace this state back to its source, we shall find that it does not result from any change either in the *law*, which is a source of so much terror to him; nor yet in his own mind, which is so perplexed and tortured. Each of these is, in its essential nature, just what it was before. The *immediate* cause to him is *consciousness*. He is now conscious of a state of facts, of which before he was unconscious. But there is a *mediate* cause, which lies back of this consciousness—the immediate or producing cause of this consciousness that he is a lost and ruined sinner. It is the gift of atonement—*the Holy Spirit*, sent from God to convince the world of sin.

In no other way can we possibly account for the mental state of *true repentance*. For if he who *compels* me to do a thing is the *cause* of my doing it, the Holy Spirit, who so brings revealed truth to the mind of a sinner that from the very nature of his mind he cannot *avoid* (if he yield his attention) *believing* what he thus clearly sees, *is the cause of his believing*. And as he who *enables* me to do a thing, but does not *compel* me to do it, (leaving me free not to do it,) is in a good sense also the cause of my doing it, the Holy Spirit, who, by thus awakening *belief* and *conscience* in a sinner, supplies the condition necessary to enable him to put forth that act of volition which we call *faith* or *trust*, is the cause of his *faith*, and hence is the active cause of his repentance.

The penitent may not cognize this state as the fruit, in any proper sense, of the Holy Spirit. Men educated in religious sentiments only, and accustomed to speculate on the subject more as a system of morals than a scheme of spiritual life, are apt to attribute repentance to the unaided operation of their own minds. Nevertheless, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and none admit it more readily and maintain it more confidently than they do after reading the Bible with the advantage of their own experience. But the uncultivated, who think but little on the subject, and to whom an awakening is a startling novelty, will readily assign it to a supernatural cause, or to some secondary cause, such as hair-breadth escapes, occurrence of death, a book or sermon, or something of the kind—just according to the idea that prevails at the time. But all true penitents alike soon learn that it is the *Holy Spirit alone that convinces of sin*.

The Spirit brings such truths before his mind as are appropriate to his case, and in such way as enables him to perceive and thereby believe and feel the truth; and this He does, in regard to truths revealed in the Bible, and nothing beyond. Now, if a man go into court, and so bring certain truths before the minds of an *attentive* jury that they see the harmony of facts and principles so clearly that they cannot avoid yielding the assent of their judgments to his statements, *we call him a witness, and his statements testimony*. Why need we scruple, then, *to call the Holy Spirit, in this case, a witness, and His work testimony!*

The truth is, the sinner in bondage to fear has the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, that he is an enslaved sinner; and this testimony is confirmed to him by the *witness* of his *own* spirit; that is, he has

his *own consciousness* that he believes and experiences the fact that he is a helpless sinner.

Now, Paul reminds the Roman Christians that this was once their state, and that they are not now in that state again, but "*have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*"

The import of these words in their connection is very obvious. "As the Holy Spirit was once a witness to you that you were unpardoned sinners, so, in the very same way, He is now a witness to you that you are adopted into His family; and, in virtue of your confidence or *faith* in the fact, you rejoice in the relation of sons, saying, 'My *Father*, My *Father!*'" But how so? Plainly thus: The man already brought to see his ruined and helpless state is in a condition to see and appreciate another truth, (not to exercise a higher faith, as some suppose; for this it is impossible for him to do, in the nature of things,) but to exercise the same *belief* in kind, and the same *faith* in kind, *in another truth*, as appropriate to him now, as the truths before believed were appropriate to him then. Thus, this great truth—"*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*"—"*through His name is preached the forgiveness of sin*"—"*he that believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life*"—the great truth which runs through these and all similar sayings of the Scriptures, is presented to his mind by the Holy Spirit. Before his *penitence*, he could no more appreciate this truth, than a child who was never sick could value the skill of a physician in a sick room! And now that he is penitent, (that is, sick,) he is too much engrossed with his sorrows, too much alive to the justice of the sentence which has gone forth against him, to listen to any terms of pardon. Hear him, as he looks up to the Cross, and reads its lessons of the deep demerit of his sins: "Pardon—pardon such a sinner as I? Absurdity—absurdity! How can God forgive me, when I never can forgive myself for having sinned so long and so much, against infinite love and mercy? Impossible—impossible!" Yet in such a state his mind is called to deal with the highest of all abstract truths, the profoundest of all metaphysics, the deepest of all mysteries—angels only *desire* to look into it! and still from the point which this man occupies it is the most simple and the most appreciable of all truths, if he can only be induced to turn his desponding mind upon it! But who is equal to the great task of breaking the spell by which selfish fear enchants him? You and I may as soon think to stanch the

flood of grief that wells up from the wailing heart of the young mother, as she catches the last imploring look of her babe, snatched by the hand of death from her warm bosom! But, thank God, there is One who is equal to this great work—the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God! He takes the "*deep things of God, and shows them to the mind of this man.*" He presents this great truth to his mind, just as it is, exactly suited to his lost and ruined state. He sees its consistency, harmony, and perfect adaptedness to his case—its truth. Is belief the assent of the judgment? Then he believes. He could no more withold his assent from this, than he could from the plainest truth in the world. He believes—there is nothing voluntary in his believing *in these circumstances*—he knows that to him, as though there was not another sinner on earth, a free and full pardon is offered through the merits of Jesus Christ. This belief, like any other act of belief in moral truth, is followed by its appropriate feeling of obligation, or *conscience*. There springs up at once a profound emotion of duty to obey all the obligations of this belief, accept all its terms. Every condition is now supplied to his voluntary power, *his will*, for its free act of volition, its act of election (call it *choice, trust, acceptance*, or the like, it comes to the same thing) *of Christ*, on the terms of the offer believed to be made. Is *faith* such an act of the will? Then the Romans exercised faith. But in the moment they made this election of Christ instead of the demands of the carnal mind, asking release from His yoke, they were justified, for "*he that believeth (has faith) is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the works of the law.*"

But what is justification? It is pardon. What is pardon? A remission of the penalty of our sins. What is the penalty thus remitted? *Jehovah's* displeasure, in the various forms in which He manifests it in this life, and will display it through all eternity! But "*God only* can forgive sin." Such remission, then, is a special act of the divine mind. But, "*the things of God knoweth no man*, (1 Corinthians, ii, 11,) no, not even the *Son of man!*" No man, then, can be cognizant of this act of the divine mind. And yet the persons in question must *trustingly* believe that this act has passed in their favor; or, from the very nature of mind itself, they can never realize personal comfort from the fact. They would be in the condition of one who accepts the offer he *believes* to be made him, and still does not realize the gift! Such hope deferred would make the

heart sick. True indeed, it is written in the Scriptures, "*he that believeth in Me shall be saved*"—pardoned; and is not this enough for his comfort? Quite enough for the belief of a great general truth; but it is nowhere written that *I have* actually reached that true penitent belief which has certainly secured the act of pardon in my favor! The mind, left to itself at this point, would recoil from such a belief as a bold presumption. All its antecedent training has been to inspire it with profound distrust of self—even to the loathing of self in sackcloth and ashes! In this mental state, to venture unaided upon such a belief would indeed be a bold presumption! And yet, to pause at this point is fatal to peace—it is to sink into the slough of Despond! only the more fatal, because of the great height of the fall! Thank God! this is not a case in which "*the children have come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth!*" There is one that does know the acts of the divine mind! The Holy Spirit *knows the mind of God;* and it is His office (as seen throughout this whole process) *to take of the things of God, and show them to the mind of man,* (John, xvi, 14,) "*that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*" (1 Corinthians, ii, 12.) This great fact, contained in the general truth revealed—"*your sins are pardoned*"—He brings before the mind; and, at the same time, enables the man so clearly to discern and so justly to discriminate his own mental states as a penitent believer, that he clearly sees the harmony of this truth with his existing mental states, and thus spiritually discerning, he believes the Scripture truth, that *he is pardoned!* And this belief, *thus reached,* is not at the expense of his humility, any more than any preceding act of belief, which, being reached in this way, did actually beget and increase it. Now, *this* belief, as in each preceding instance of belief, is immediately followed by its own appropriate emotion—a feeling of duty to take upon him the yoke of public profession, and openly *confess Christ before man!* The act of faith (consent) as immediately follows, and he breaks forth in strains of humble joy—"*Yes, I, even so great a sinner as I, am pardoned! I was lost, but am found! I was dead, but am alive! Glory to God in the highest!*" His heart overflows with grateful love and triumphant joy!

In all this, no miracle is performed, as some suppose. The result, according to the established laws of mind, could not be otherwise than it is. A system of new truths is initiated in the mind. Not

by any one act, but by all together, an entire change is effected. The *pure reason*, whose vast powers of discerning abstract truth had been for the most part limited in its exercise to the demands of external knowledge, (which were only to gratify the physical senses, through which it came, and which state of facts subordinated it to the carnal mind,) is now raised to its own proper sphere and dignity. It is raised to deal with those high abstract ideas, the *trustful* belief of which has operated to enthrone *love* in the heart. Before this, the ideas which come through the physical senses (the use which the reason made of this knowledge constitutes the carnal mind) furnished the *will* with *natural desires*, in the form of appetite, propensity, and affection, as the only motive of action. Of course, the man was carnally minded, or lived to gratify natural desire. This gratification was only restrained by the limits of the will's power, and the fear of public opinion, and those checks of spiritual conscience awakened by the ideas of pure moral truth brought before the reason by the Holy Spirit. But as no act of faith, or consent to obey this conscience, followed the *emotion*, both the belief and the emotion passed away, and left the reason, as before, the mere agent of *natural desire!* But now the *pure reason, the true spiritual nature*, believing and trusting in the ideas of moral truth, has, in the place of *natural desire*, enthroned in the heart, *the love of God* as the great motive of the will's future action. The *will* is now in circumstances of power never before realized. It can limit the gratification of the *natural desires* by the will of God; and to do this is to keep the commandments of God.

Thus we see that the law, (as a schoolmaster,) having brought him to Christ, has effected that which, because it *"was weak"* through the dominion of the carnal mind, it could not of itself do—that is, effected obedience to the commandments of God. The man is changed altogether, in beliefs, feelings, and practice. He is born again. He is a new creature in Christ Jesus! And from first to last, the Holy Spirit is the *direct* agent, employed in the office of a witness, or one testifying to the truth; and *faith* in Christ (an act of man's will) is the *condition* on which he realizes the benefits of this testimony.

Now, to realize a thing is to be conscious of it. Hence this man is conscious he *believes*, and is conscious he feels that which he believes. He is conscious he *trusts*, and conscious that he feels the

ultimate results of this *trust*—that is, he feels the love of God shed abroad in his heart. He has then the evidence of his own consciousness, that he is a new man. And as a man's spirit is the power by which he is *conscious* or knows his own mental states, he has, in the fact of his *consciousness*, the evidence of his own spirit, corroborating the testimony of the Divine Spirit, that he is a child of God.

Such was the experience of Roman Christians. But what they experienced, it is the privilege of all to experience who live under the Gospel dispensation. Hence the Apostle asserts the general truth, "*The Spirit itself beareth witness*" (along) "*with our spirits, that we are the children of God.*" And, surely, if a man may affirm that he knows any particular thing, when that thing is so presented to his mind that he clearly sees its harmony with all his ideas of truth, and at the same time has a distinct consciousness that he does so perceive it, and (still more) that he personally enjoys the benefits resulting from that truth, then may the Christian say, "I know that I am a child of God." Aye, and not to say it is, to his mind, the most unnatural thing in the world. This is so obvious, that unless his judgment of duty is betrayed, by a false philosophy, into an ungrateful silence, he will naturally exclaim, with David, "*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul; as far as the East is from the West, so far hath He separated my transgressions from me.*"

It is therefore the privilege of all to whom Christ is preached, to *know their sins forgiven;* and unless I have greatly mistaken the facts of Christian experience, and those mental states which that experience necessarily implies, this doctrine is in perfect harmony with them.

II. Several inferences of grave import are deducible from this discussion. I notice two only.

1. The things to which the Divine Spirit together with our own spirit testifies, and the conscious perception of which constitutes our knowledge of them, are matters of *moral* truth, and not of physical or *absolute* truth. Therefore our knowledge of these truths, though to us certain, and in themselves certain, is *moral* knowledge, and *not absolute* knowledge.

This distinction is of grave import, in estimating the practical bearings of the apostle's doctrine. A failure to note this distinction

has led many, of sound experience in the things of God, to reject the doctrine altogether; and from the same cause, many who adopt it have employed such terms to express their views, or have urged such conclusions from their views, as justly lay them open to the charge of fanatical error. Let us examine these terms.

All spiritual truth is *moral* truth, and all primary or intuitive truth is *absolute* truth. The difference is this: Absolute truth is not only certain in itself, and certain to our minds, (if we know it at all,) but it is certain in this sense, that the opposite is in itself an *impossibility*, and therefore such an *absurdity* that we are not capable of believing it under any circumstances. *Two* and *two* are equal to *four*, is an absolute truth; if I know it at all, I am incapable of doubting it, or in any degree of believing its contradictory. Not so with *moral* truth. This, though certain in itself, and certain to our minds, (if we know it at all,) is yet of such a nature, or our relations to it are such, that, to our minds, its opposite or contradictory is *not* in itself an impossibility, and therefore not such an absurdity that, in given circumstances, we cannot doubt or disbelieve the moral truth, and in that ratio believe its contradictory. That a man is so *entirely* penitent and *trustful* as to place him among those to whom the divine assurance of pardon is given, and that this promised act of pardon has really passed the divine mind in his favor, are high and consoling moral truths. He may be entirely certain of their truth, and say, and truly say, "*I know it;*" and yet, that these propositions are *not true*, is not in itself an impossibility, and therefore not such an absurdity but that he may (*in given circumstances*) believe the one proposition, when he *ought* to believe the other. In a word, such is the nature of this truth, in its relations to him, that he is liable to be betrayed to *doubt* that which he ought not to doubt, and lose the comfortable assurance of his acceptance. There is a wide difference, then, in these kinds of knowledge. The one is absolute certainty; the other is moral certainty. The one admits of no doubt, under any circumstances; the other, though certainly true, may yet be doubted, under given circumstances. The Christian may, very improperly, allow himself to doubt. These doubts may ripen into the greatest disaster—even the rejection of Christ.

These things being so, he who asserts that he knows he is a child of God, in the sense of absolute knowledge, (as many do,) commits

himself to a belief that admits of no doubt at any time. For such a one to doubt, as it is quite possible he may do, and very certain he will do, if not well instructed in the things of God, is to be thrown upon the conviction that his whole experience is a delusion of some kind! It is well if he escape unhurt from this snare of Satan. It is to be feared that many a young and uninstructed convert has been wrecked upon this coast of unbelief, and set adrift again upon the wide ocean of sin. On the other hand, many who thus confound moral with absolute certainty, because this certainty implies the impossibility of doubting under any circumstances, reject the doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit altogether, and involve themselves in errors no less disastrous. Instead of saying, with Paul, "*the Spirit itself beareth witness with my spirit, that I am a child of God*," or "*I know whom I have believed*," they would have us say, "I *hope* I am a child of God." But it is quite certain this is no improvement on Paul's language, and may prove as fatal to them as it is certainly contradictory of his theology! One thing may be relied on—genuine Christian experience is essentially the same in the case of every man who realizes it. Temperament and education, or habits of thought, will to an extent modify its manifestation, both to ourselves and to others. One is neither the less or more a Christian, because his views and feelings are marked by particular accidents of birth or education. The general class, to which all varieties belong, is distinctly marked as to essential experience. Each individual of this class takes upon him the yoke of Christ, openly avowing himself a child of God, and, as such, asserting his hope of getting to heaven at last. Now, this is his profession before all the world, and he is so understood in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.

But upon what ground is this profession made? He makes it, because he is satisfied in his own mind that he is a child of God; and nothing short of this open declaration of what God has done for him will fill the measure of his gratitude for the great love wherewith He has loved him. All true disciples agree in this experience. They are conscious these things are so. Now, if they also allow themselves to think, that because they are certain these things are so, they cannot, under any circumstances, doubt about them; they fall into gross error. They assume that the subject matter of their knowledge is in itself absolute truth, which is not the case. The dominion of this error (as already stated) may prove their ruin.

If, now, to avoid this error, that a true Christian cannot at any time doubt his conversion, we adopt the doctrine, that the *new birth* does not imply the knowledge of sins forgiven, and by consequence reject the doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit; we shall not mend the matter. For, if this be true, we make *doubting* a necessary element of Christian experience. We shall not usually rise higher than our aim. But we do not aim to rise higher than a *hope* of present acceptance, which necessarily implies a *doubt* as to our conversion. But this, in the nature of things, is a very uncomfortable state to an awakened mind. It will inevitably keep it in constant conflict with this assurance of the Saviour: "*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" For it is very certain, that when He fulfils this promise, He brings our minds into that state of quiet repose which is utterly inconsistent with the idea that a painful doubt (and all doubt is painful) should hang over the question of our present safety. Should one at any time feel this quiet repose of mind, in the belief that he is a child of God; as he does not allow himself to think that he can be thus conscious or know that this is so, he is bound to ignore the consciousness as mere fanatical excitement, and to fall back into painful fears of the future. This error, in many instances, effectually shuts the door against the peace which can only flow from the *trustful* belief that we are the children of God. I am not surprised, therefore, that the *peace and joy* of the true spiritual life should not more generally characterize the experience of this class of persons; but that, wearied and harassed with doubts, they should so generally tend to the coldness and inanity of formalism! I know not which is the greater evil of the two—the holding the truth in error, or the rejection of the truth in order to avoid the error!

The true ground, it seems to me, is this: "It is my privilege to know my sins forgiven; but this knowledge constitutes *moral* certainty, not absolute certainty." This ground is safe. No man need fear to take the fortunes of truth. If I can know that anything is true, I surely *know* that to be true which the Holy Spirit, together with my own consciousness, testifies to me is true. Still this certainty is not absolute. If it was, I could in no case doubt the fact. But I am capable of doubting, and of believing it *is not*, when it really is so. Because *that it is not so*, is to my mind, at least, possible. And if I allow myself to be betrayed (as Satan has betrayed

many) into those unscriptural views which lead me to conclude, contrary to all truth, that my deep repentance and conscious belief that I am a child of God might be, and probably is, the work of Satan, or of my own deceitful heart; I shall certainly doubt of my acceptance, and believe myself deceived in that of which I was before satisfied that *I knew!* And so, if I allow myself to take these unscriptural views of the *love* of which I am now so happily conscious, that lead to the belief that, because it is not as ardent as I think it ought to be, in the case of so great a sinner as I have been, and that therefore it does not result from the fact that I am pardoned, but from the fact that I only *imagine* that I am; in this case, also, I shall doubt. And these perplexing doubts will not only greatly abridge my comforts, but lay me open to the most disastrous assaults of my spiritual foes. Now, we know that it is possible, and especially for such as are not deeply experienced in the teachings of the Bible, to be betrayed into these erroneous methods of thinking. Therefore our certainty that we are the children of God is not absolute certainty. For, if so, the proposition that *we were not*, would be to our intuitive perceptions an impossibility in itself, and we should be incapable of believing it in the slightest degree, or even of maintaining any such course of thinking as might lead to the belief of it. For these reasons, it would be impossible for Satan even to tempt us to such belief. For, since the world began, it was never known that a sane mind was either induced to believe, or even tempted to believe, that two and two are not equal to four. But he does tempt the children of God to believe that they are not pardoned. The fact that this proposition is not to their intuitive perceptions an impossibility, is the ground on which he is able to do it. And (I repeat) if we allow ourselves to be decoyed to those stand-points from which his proposition looks reasonable, (and there are many such,) we shall find ourselves believing it, and of course doubting whether we are the children of God. Doubt is the first step towards the highway of unbelief and ruin. Let us beware of the first step!

Aye then, says one, this doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit is not the comfortable doctrine I have been taught to think it is! My objection is, that your view robs it of half its comfort. I supposed that the witness of the Spirit left no room to doubt, and it troubles me to think that with this witness it is even possible for me to doubt!

As an experimental Christian, you are sentimentally correct; but allow me to say, that you need to be instructed as to the language you use, and the extent to which that language, no doubt, misrepresents your own views. Your objection implies that the comfort in question arises from the intensity or degree of the certainty, and that there is more certainty (so to speak) in absolute certainty than in moral certainty. But this is not the case, as you suppose. In absolute certainty you are *entirely* certain, and in moral certainty you may be *entirely* certain. In each case the certainty is complete. There is no room for increase, in the case in which it is complete. And yet the difference in the comfort arising from these certainties is very great; and, contrary to your hypothesis, it is all on the side of moral certainty. You are certain that *one* and *one* are equal to two. You are also entirely certain that your dying wife was sincere when she extorted the promise to meet her in heaven. Which affords you most comfort? The first has its pleasure as a question of science; the second affords immeasurable comfort as a question of moral certainty. Whence does this great difference arise? Not from the degree of certainty—for that is the same in each case, but from the *nature* of the truth of which you are certain. Physical truths (matters of absolute certainty) are sources of pleasure, and especially when connected, as they frequently are, with moral truths. But moral truths, because they involve the questions of right and wrong, (good and evil,) deal directly with men's feelings, and are therefore the great sources of human comfort. Are you morally certain that you are a child of God? What if it *be possible* for you to believe it to be otherwise? That is not a reason why you *should* believe it to be otherwise. You are now on a lofty eminence, which relieves the oppressive heat by refreshing breezes, and affords you the most commanding views your eyes ever beheld! You are certain your situation is one of entire safety, but you are equally certain that it may prove to be a very unsafe one; but surely this is no reason why you should walk to the edge of the precipice, and precipitate yourself headlong to ruin! And how did you reach the present *spiritual* elevation, on which you are so conscious that you are safe? It was by *assenting* (an act of judgment) to the successive Scripture truths brought by the Holy Spirit before your mind, and by *consenting* (an act of the will, or faith) to all the obligations you felt that this belief imposed upon you. The last in the series of these truths was, that

you were pardoned. To the obligations of this truth, to wit: that you take upon you the yoke of Christ, or a Christian profession, bearing the Cross before all men, and thus glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are His, you also *consented.* Thus you received the Lord Jesus! Now, "*as ye received Him, so walk ye in Him.*" In Him abide. Keep your mind upon these points, and employ yourself in efforts to fulfil all the obligations of your commitment, and you will not be annoyed with doubts. You will daily advance to manhood in the Christian life. In a word, *trust* and *work* in doing good, and you will be a stranger to doubts. But allow yourself so far to yield your faith or consent to the obligations of duty as to feel culpably negligent, because duty is so great a weariness that oftentimes you cannot encounter it, and, you may rely on it, doubts will rise upon you like an armed man. You have in a measure yielded (though secretly) your faith. You have cast away your shield! The enemy is at hand. If you do not quickly recover your shield, he will be upon you with all his forces. But, again, even though you go not so far as to withdraw your consent to the obligations of duty, but allow yourself to cherish those "*vain thoughts*" which Satan has power to excite, and which, with David, you have so much cause to deplore; you will find that your mind is led away from the only safe stand-point, which is this: "Jesus Christ is my atonement—in Him I am safe." Instead of these ideas, it is led to deal with "*vain* thoughts." But it is not able to distinguish those which Satan suggests (and which, therefore, you cannot help) from those which spring up from your own mind, and which therefore you ought to help, and would help, if you were at the right stand-point. Such persons are soon perplexed and confounded by these harassing mental states. What they know to be at least possible, they will soon begin to look on as quite probable; that is, they will begin to doubt whether they were converted! But the voice of the Good Shepherd is crying after these lambs of the fold. It is well if the fears which now distract them, cause them to turn their eyes to Him. They will soon again be at His feet; and, though wounded and bleeding, they will be looking up to Him, and resolving to go not again for fruit into the wilderness of vain thoughts! Frequent excursions, however, of this kind, will beget self-confidence. Self-confidence makes us deaf to the voice of the Good Shepherd. The danger is not the less, nor may we be the less sensible of it; but we

are learning to trust ourselves for safety—our reason—our philosophy—our moral firmness to maintain our faith against all odds! But the contest is an unequal one. The case is one in which *this* David is gone to meet Goliath, without his sling, or even so much as a pebble from the brook of truth! Wearied with so unequal a contest, the yoke of Christ's profession will become a sore burden. Consent to its obligations may be withdrawn; and, if so, the man emerges from this wilderness of mental conflict, into the broad desert of sin and ruin, where the voice of the Good Shepherd is seldom heard!

Let us, then, stand near the Cross! Let us *work*, as well as watch and pray! Let the desponding, melancholy man, whose mind is torn by distracting thoughts, break away to the field of duty—his farm—his merchandise—or to his study. Here he may find the Cross! Only let him ask, as he adds dollar to dollar, or wins golden opinions from the good, with persecutions from the evil, how shall I turn this growing capital to the account of my Lord's goods? What pious foundations can I lay? Where, how, can I do good with my Lord's money? So, also, let the woman do, whose feeble nerves are daily yielding under mental frictions, which make life a burden, and precipitate her into the "slough of Despond!" In *duty* she will find the Cross, and be comforted by the voice of the Good Shepherd. Let her, therefore, break away from her sentimental books! Let her away to her kitchen, her chambers, and to every part of the field of domestic duty; or away to the houses of sorrow and death! Let her own sweet voice console the afflicted! Let her own soft hands minister to the wants of the sick, and smooth the pillow of the dying! In all these things, the Cross shall be seen without a vail between, and the voice of the Good Shepherd be so heard within as to make you certain of your acceptance—so certain as to shut out all occasion to doubt. You shall grow in grace, and rejoice as you look forward to your home in heaven!

2. Another inference from this discussion is, that it is the *joint* testimony of the Divine Spirit and of our own spirits that is the ground of our knowledge.

Neither of these, separately considered, will meet the necessities of our case. They are *joint* witnesses, and must be so considered. The divine testimony is the cause, and our consciousness is the effect. The cause is imminent in the effect, and cannot in truth be separated from it. The Christian, who, in his modes of thinking, shall

divorce that which God has joined together, will do so at great hazard, however sincere he may be.

Suppose a man, for example, ignores his consciousness of *love, joy, peace, and the like,* (the testimony of his own spirit,) and relies alone, for proofs of his Christian character, upon what he considers the witness of the Divine Spirit; he will soon grow to be a pure fanatic. Guided by impulses alone, he will adopt the wildest and most extravagant doctrines—the fruit of an overwrought imagination—and present, from time to time, the most ridiculous caricatures of the plainest truths of the Bible. Such a one will grow rapidly in spiritual pride. Inflated beyond measure with self-importance, it will be well if he stop this side of actual lunacy!

On the other hand, suppose a man ignores (as I incline to think but few do, in point of fact, although many do it in the terms of their theory) the witness of the Divine Spirit altogether; he will gain, it is true, by avoiding many of the errors of fanaticism, but, in another direction, he will lose the full equivalent of the gains.

This man relies upon his consciousness of *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance, and fidelity,* as the proofs and tests of his claim to the hope of heaven. But the question will often arise—he cannot help it; the interests involved suggest it—what is *love,* and the rest? and why should they establish my claim to heaven? *Why love?* It is the pleasurable feeling, the delight, I have in thinking of God as my reconciled Father! But, surely, I must first be persuaded in my own mind that He is my reconciled Father, before I can possibly delight in Him as such. But how now? You show to your own satisfaction that you *love* God, by the fact that you are before persuaded that He is your reconciled Father; and you then prove that He is your reconciled Father, by the fact that you *love* Him! Mahomet is a prophet. How do you know he is? Because the Koran says so. But how do you know that what the Koran says is true? Because Mahomet is a prophet, and he says it is true. Very smart, to be sure! So, in this case, the man postulates the fact that God has pardoned him, and thus accounts for his *love;* and then proves his postulate by the fact that he does love Him! Equally smart, no doubt! Now, the truth is, that Satan makes short work of all such logic as this. In the case of every man (speaking of truly converted men) who does not, most fortunately, deceive himself, when he asserts that he discards the doctrine

of the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, the matter will stand before his unclouded reason somewhat in this way, namely: "It is idle for me to think of knowing that an act of pardon has passed the divine mind in my favor, unless the Holy Spirit (the admitted medium of communication, if there be any at all) has by some means so displayed the Scripture statement before the mind, that the *believer* is pardoned, that I so clearly discern the agreement of my mental states with this assurance as to be fully persuaded that I am pardoned. He only is cognizant of the fact, and, if I be not informed by Him, I am not informed at all; and to allow myself to think that it is so, is the mere fancy of a heated imagination—the wild dream of an excited brain! But I utterly discard the belief that there is any such testimony of the Divine Spirit. Therefore, any impression that I may cherish that I am pardoned is mere imagination; and the idea that I delight in God, as reconciled to me (which could not be without the antecedent belief that He was reconciled) is the mere chimera of an excited brain, which, like the 'stars and garters' that dance before the minds of the ambitious, plays in the foreground of my thought!" The whole thing, he says, is unworthy of a man of sense! This man does not fall into mere doubts. He rushes headlong into disbelief; and it is well, if he stop in a decent morality.

But there are those who, although they reject the doctrine in question, still greatly magnify the office of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners. If there is a revival, an awakening, a conversion—in each case, they say truly, the Spirit does it. Now, all this involves a belief in the doctrine for which we contend. And hence, I must think these persons deceive themselves, and fortunately so, because it is on the side of truth. But still "the fly is in the ointment." No error is safe, and especially when it enters into a matter of Christian experience, as this does; for these men, no less than the others, will certainly find themselves entoiled in the meshes of their own false theory. They will recoil with horror, it is true, from the infidelity to which the other is driven; and falling back upon their settled belief, that all religion is somehow the work of the Spirit, they will conclude, despite their theory as to His office as witness, that He has in some way, without a direct antecedent persuasion of pardon—an impossibility, by the way, unless He work by miracle, violating the laws of mind, which no Bible reader pretends to believe—wrought love, peace, and joy, in the heart, and the like graces

in the life; and that these, and these alone, are the proofs to the man that he is pardoned. But then they are not freed from serious difficulties, nevertheless. Their theory must have its effect. The belief that the Holy Spirit so brings the direct truth before the mind that the merit of Christ's atonement has really and actually availed to procure a direct pardon for *him*, is a belief which brings the mind and keeps the mind in direct contact with the atonement, both as the cause and the proof of his pardon. But to reject the belief that the Holy Spirit does testify to this fact, by so displaying it to the mind, is to throw us upon this necessity; the current of thought is turned away from this immediate contact with the atonement of Christ, as both the cause and proof of pardon, and turned to the graces of *love*, and peace, and the like, as the direct proofs. Now I say, that of course, (*of course*, because he can no more help it than he can help the harmony of truth,) to our minds, these graces can only be proofs in the ratio in which we estimate them to exist. Take love, for example. If our delight in thinking of God as our reconciled Father is very great, the proof that we are pardoned is very strong. If it exists in a slight degree, the proof is weak. Now, when will it appear to a man's mind that his love, thus considered in itself, is very great? It can only so appear, when to his mind it corresponds, in some good degree, with what it ought to be, in the case of so great a sinner as he knows himself to have been! But this correspondence can never exist, in the case of a sinner saved by grace. "*She loved much, because much was forgiven.*" This is the principle laid down by the Saviour, and it is the one that ought to govern us; and it is the only one that can control this man's thoughts, from the stand-point which he at present occupies. Upon this principle, then, he is to determine the essential value of his love. Of what value can he decide it to be? I lay it down as an unquestionable truth, that the sinner, *saved by grace*, can give but one answer to the question, "Is the grateful pleasure which I feel towards God, *such* as so great and unworthy a sinner as I am ought to feel?" and that is, "*No! no!* It is not, by any means, such as it ought to be!" Nay, we need not be surprised if this subject of grace, having a clear view of the exceeding evil of sin, should be reluctant to admit that he has any love, any peace, or anything else but a deep sense of sin and its fearful results. But, still, the emotion which he is estimating remains to be accounted for. It is a strange *something*. What is it?

and echo answers, What is it? The door is thus thrown wide open to the tempter. He enters, and the conflict begins. There are fearful odds in Satan's favor, because the conflict is from within! "Your love is nothing," says he; "you yourself admit it." And how can he help admitting it? For in the comparative view which he takes of it, really it is nothing worth the mention, and it must always remain so; because, the higher he rises in grace, the more love he has, in point of fact; the more clearly does he discriminate the wide difference there is between the love that he has and the love that he ought to have, as a sinner *saved by grace!* So, then, from this point of observation, the more he actually has, the less he really estimates it to be! What chance, then, has he, in so unequal a contest as this? Who need wonder, when he considers the fluctuations to which *emotion* is liable, from many causes, and the specific abatement which it suffers under this severe mental conflict, that this man yields to the belief that his love is only imaginary, animal feeling, or sympathy, and thus falls before his enemy? And if he escape at all from this snare of Satan, it is by falling back upon his general belief, (for it is only general.) "All religion is the work of the Spirit, and the Christians tell me I have religion; somehow, this is grace, and I won't give it up!" The highest attainment we can suppose it possible for a mind in these circumstances to reach, is one of alternate hope and fear, until the mind settles down into a mere "*hope* to go to heaven," often interrupted by serious and painful doubts whether the hope is well founded.

Hence the origin of this doubting "hope-so" religion! The evidence of our own spirit—our consciousness of love, peace, and obedience—*is divorced* from the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testimony is imminent in that of our *own* spirits, and without which that of our spirits is in truth worth nothing as proof, but with which it is most conclusive and consoling evidence.

Restore this union. The facts will appear very differently from this union as the point of observation. The mental states which follow will also be very different, and the odds will be greatly in our favor, in the battle to which we go! Let us see: I take the case of a genuine subject of grace, who holds the doctrine of Paul in regard to the *union* of these witnesses, who says the testimony of the Holy Spirit is, not *to* our spirits, but along "*with* our spirits." He too, as every other man, is drawn into this great battle. What are his mental

states in this severe struggle, and, it may be, on the banks of the Jordan of death? "What evidence have you," says Satan, "to sustain your claim of right to retire from the place in my ranks which once you so nobly filled?" "I am pardoned." "What! do *you* love God too?" "Yes, I trust I do delight in him greatly, but not as much as I ought to do, and hope I soon shall do. My love is very little, compared with what it ought to be, so great were my sins." "But how do you know that you love him?" "Because I was *able* to believe, and did believe, that Jesus died for me." "Suppose He did; it does not follow that you are pardoned, unless you admit the doctrine of universal salvation; and if so, we are agreed, and will walk together." "Aye, but I was persuaded that His atonement did really avail to procure an act of pardon for me; and, moreover, I saw so clearly the harmony of my own mental states with this fact, and with the teachings of God's Word, I not only believed it, but I had faith in it; I trusted in it, and therein *committed myself to all the obligations of an open profession that Jesus died for me!* And you know that no such poor carnal sinner, as I was, could trust in so high and holy a truth as that, unless the Holy Spirit had broken my chains, dispelled my darkness, and lifted me up to see and admire its beauty, and its harmony with essential truth! Now, these things being so, I think it very reasonable that I should love Him! It would be the most unreasonable thing in the world, if I did not; and I reproach myself that I do not love Him more! My belief and my faith, the Scriptures teach me, are the work of the Holy Spirit. I am sure they cannot be the work of anything else." "But do you not allow that it is at least possible you may be deceived?" "Yes, and none know it better than you, or you would not try to induce me to believe that I am deceived! It does not follow, however, that I am deceived, because it is *possible* that I may be. Moreover, lest I be led away by your delusions, that some other spirit, satanic or fanatic, has persuaded me to this belief, He has given me another evidence; it is the testimony of my own spirit. He tells me that *love, peace, joy, and a holy life,* are the *fruits* of this divine testimony; that no other spirit, on earth or in hell, can bear these fruits in my heart and life, but the Divine Spirit. The insight He gives me into the atonement leads me to see that I am a sinner. His further insight gives me to see that I am a pardoned sinner—a light so clear to my mind that I not only believe, but I *trust,* and thus commit myself to

all the obligations of this belief; and the fruit of it all is, *I love God;* and my consciousness that I do love Him, however little compared with what it ought to be, is proof to me that I am not deceived. The two witnesses united leave me without a shadow of doubt that I am on my way to heaven; I therefore boldly assert my independence of you, Satan, and joyfully commit myself to glorify Jesus in my body and in my spirit, which are His, and not yours!"

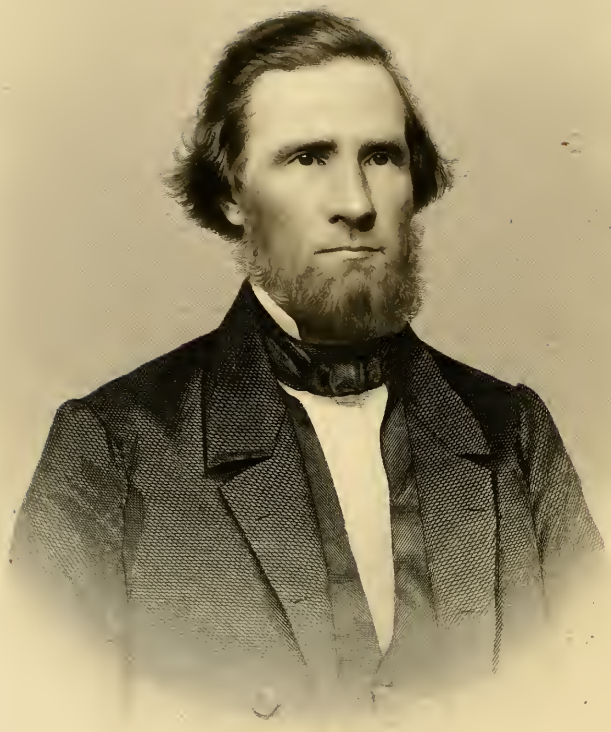
Thus we perceive that this saving truth keeps the whole current of thought in direct contact with the atonement. It weds and welds the soul to the Cross, the Christian's only hope. It is equally removed from fanaticism and from formalism. Little as his love and imperfect as his obedience may be, compared with what they ought to be, still these graces are the fruits, little or much, of this witnessing spirit; and thus the mind is led to the Cross, and kept at the Cross—the only point from which he can view himself, as he is, *a sinner saved by grace.*

This man, we say, is born again. Though but a babe in Christ, it may be, he has every element of the spiritual life, and enters with cheerful confidence upon its hopes and its toils. He is in this moment an "*heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ.*" For the babe is not the less a human being, because it is a babe; nor is this man the less a child of God, because he is newly born. If he die in the moment he first believes, the atonement avails for him; he goes directly to Paradise. If he lives, he must "*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" The muscles and limbs of the babe must grow to maturity. So must this man's spiritual muscles and limbs—all his mental states—take their intended position of *height, depth, and permanency.* And as the being, who was once a babe, is now conscious that he is a man, so he, who was once a babe in Christ, may also be conscious of his maturity—his fixedness in grace and in holy pursuits: "*My heart is fixed; O God, my heart is fixed.*"

Reader, are you trying to go to heaven? Do not live without this joint testimony. The Cross! the Cross! This is your only plea. Nothing but these united, witnessing spirits, can bind you to the Cross. Even when you shall have reached the maturity of spiritual manhood—the sanctified state, in which you rejoice in the unwavering fixedness of your purpose to glorify God in all things—your great elevation will but serve to enable you to stretch your spiritual

vision so far away into the immeasurable abyss between you and the infinite holiness of God, that the contrast, reflecting its light into the depths of your own heart, will discover so vast a disparity between what is and what ought to be, that you will still feel abased before God; and nothing but the Cross, the blessed Cross, will enable you to maintain your confidence; and nothing, I repeat, but these witnessing spirits will bind you to this Cross!

"Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of Thy blood."



Robert Turnbull

SOWING BESIDE ALL WATERS.

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Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.—*Isaiah*, xxxii, 20.

It is generally allowed that our text forms a part of a Messianic prediction. It was originally addressed to ancient Israel, whose land was to be "trodden under foot" until "the Spirit shall be poured out from on high," and "the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest;" when a man, (the Messiah,) shall be a hiding-place from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;" when "the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf hear, the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."

"Then," adds the prophet, fixing the nature of the event referred to, with the utmost precision, "judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

A resplendent prospect thus gradually opens upon the vision of the prophet—far distant, it is true, but distinct and luminous. The wilderness transformed into a fruitful field, the earth at rest, myriads of redeemed and sanctified men walking in the light of God, or reposing in "peaceable habitations, in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."

Others, indeed, are cast off; for a scene of desolation momentarily breaks in upon the entrancing vision. "When it shall hail coming down on the forest, and the city shall be low in a low place."

But he speedily loses sight of this in the deepening splendors of the new creation, as he sees its peaceful subjects going forth, in

happy bands, to sow beside all waters. "Blessed," says he, with exultant emotion, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters!"

Brethren, the kingdom of Christ is come! His reign on earth has commenced. The wilderness and the solitary places are visited. Waters break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. Spring is breathing over land and sea. A motion and a stir are felt in the depths of forests. The sowers are abroad, on the hillside and in the valley. Is it not the sight, in its first stage of advancement, which greeted the eyes of the prophet? Did he not see the sowers, in the wilderness of this new land, on the banks of the Hudson and the Mississippi, by the far Oregon and the golden shores of the Pacific? Did he not see them on the banks of the Nile, by the waters of the Ganges, the Brahmapootra, and the Irrawaddy? Did not his heart go out towards them? Did he not mingle, so to speak, in their toils and triumphs? Above all, did he not behold the glorious harvest waving in the light of heaven, ripe for the sickle of the Lord—and so, hailing them through the ages, cry out, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters?"

This is the great work to which, in all times, the church is called. This is the work to which we are called. Let us inquire, then, with a view to a practical application of the subject, *what* and *where* and *how* we are to sow; and, finally, as to the *blessedness* of sowing beside all waters.

I. In answer to the question, *What are we to sow?* we reply, briefly and at once, in the words of Christ, "the good seed of the kingdom"—that is, as we understand it, the seed of eternal truth, which, taking root in the soil of the human heart, shall "grow up, in some thirty, in others sixty, and in others a hundred fold, unto everlasting life." Hence, it is not every seed bearing the semblance of the divine which ripens for immortality. Nothing earth-born or artificial is capable of producing a result so stupendous and beautiful. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and no "broad" or formal church can divest it of this character; "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is emphatically the seed of God, the *supernatural*, and thence "incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth forever." In plainer and less figurative words, it is the simple but omnipotent truth of God, given us in Christ, and made vital—"quick and powerful," as St. Paul expresses it—by the Holy Spirit. Descending from heaven as a power, it ascends thither as a growth.

"For as the rain cometh down from heaven, and returneth not thither again, but watereth the earth, that there may be seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth. It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." The eternal harvest on the hills of God is thus assured. "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

What we want is not the husks of old speculations and arid dogmas; not the chaff of human philosophy, fluttering its brief hour amid the changing winds of opinion; not the debris of outward forms and vain superstitions, gathered from the dust of the dark ages; but the simple Gospel of Christ, quickened by the breath of the Almighty, and lodged as a living power in throbbing human hearts.

This is what each man, "dead in trespasses and sins," needs. This is what the world, hoary with guilt, needs for its renovation. And thus, with all the prophets and apostles of the olden time, we cry, "O Earth! Earth! Earth! hear the Word of the Lord!"

Christianity, then, as a miracle of grace, as a life-giving seed, must be preached, in its integrity, among all nations, "for a witness." It is only thus that it will prove "glad tidings of great joy unto all people," and that the angels of God will accompany its proclamation with their jubilant song, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and good will to men!"

II. Our next inquiry is, *Where shall we sow?* In its more general application, the answer has been anticipated; for, obviously, "the field is the world." Unlike all other religions, Christianity is adapted to universality. Everywhere, in all soils, in all climates, the seed of the kingdom germinates and grows. It thrives equally in India and Iceland. Other religions, Pagan and Mohammedan, are local and temporary. Expatriated, they wither and die. They are stationary, also, in the very lands which gave them birth. Intertwined with the social and political prejudices of the people whose spirit has formed them, they are incapable of the slightest improvement and expansion. They recognise "lords many and gods many"—"gods of the valleys," and "gods of hills." Thus we have the nature-worship of the ancient Magi—the adoration of the sun, moon, and stars; then the aesthetic,

symbolic worship of the Greeks, in which all the forces of nature and the passions of the human soul are deified and adored; after that, the political hero-worship of the Romans, in which, by a transference of human qualities to the gods, men are transformed into gods, and gods into men. Similar systems are reproduced in modern times, so that pantheism, or nature-worship, and polytheism—which is man-worship, or, in more degraded form, beast worship—constitute the religions of the entire heathen world—adapted, of course, with endless variations, to differens countries, and expressing, with marvellous precision, the moral condition of each. Narrow, local, defective, superstitious, often licentious and demoralizing, and in some instances absolutely demoniac, the earth groans under the despotism of religions; so that what was originally meant for a blessing is turned into a curse.

The religion of Mohammed, founded partially upon the Bible, and recognising one true and eternal God, is a great advance; but that, too, is narrow and local in its origin and aspirations. It has no power of transformation, in the case either of the individual soul or of the race. It is meagre, despotic, and selfish; so that it is impossible for the nation in which it prevails to rise into anything like moral strength and grandeur. The religion of the Jews, in its primitive purity, true and divine, after all, was local and temporary, being adapted to the peculiar condition of the Hebrew race, and preparatory to something better and more enduring.

There was needed, then, for man, as man, a system of religion, simple, spiritual, plastic, universal—a religion adapted to human nature in all its phases, and thus fitted for constant and unlimited expansion.

Such is Christianity, so generous and comprehensive in its whole character and aims, bringing God to man in all the fullness of His love and power, as the Universal Father, and bringing man to God, as the child of eternity; knowing, therefore, none high, none low, none rich or poor, bond or free, but treating all as souls, partakers of the same guilt, heirs of the same immortality.

Hence, it has found a response wherever it has found men, whether on the banks of the Jordan, or in the depths of Scythian forests, beneath the shadow of the Parthenon, or on the rock-bound coast of New England. Those who proclaimed it at first went everywhere preaching the Word. They addressed men as guilty sinners, yet with

a power or capacity of endless life. Multitudes, of every name and nation, heard this and believed. The heart of man everywhere met the heart of God. The inhabitants of Palestine, Greeks and Romans, Cretes and Arabians, Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, Parthians and Cyrenians, dusky Ethiops and the dwellers on the Nile, were made "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Far off in the depths of India, and amid the wilds of Scandinavia, men and women felt the life-giving grace. "There is not a nation," says Justin Martyr, in the first half of the second century, "either of Greek or barbarian, or any other name, even of those who wander in tribes or live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the Universe, in the name of the crucified Jesus." So, also, Clement of Alexandria, a little later, contrasting the doctrine of the Cross with the speculations of the philosophers, narrow in their range and limited in their influence, says: "The philosophers were confined to Greece and to their particular retainers, but the doctrine of Christianity did not remain in Judea, but is spread through the whole world, in every nation and village and city, converting both whole families and separate individuals, having already brought over to the truth not a few of the philosophers themselves."

The same thing has occurred in modern times. So that, could we pass round the world, we should hear hymns to Christ, whether we lingered under the walls of the Burman pagoda, threaded the Karen jungles, sat under the banyan of India, or climbed the heights of the Syrian hills. At one time, you might hear them floating from the burning sands of Africa; at another, from the coral reefs of Polynesian isles.

Such, then, is the general reply to the question, *Where shall we sow?*

But the words of our text suggest a yet more specific answer, and one involving considerations of the highest practical moment. "Blessed are ye that sow beside *all waters.*" The field, indeed, is the world, but it must be approached and occupied in a certain order, and in specific directions. So that in these words is hidden a profound practical philosophy, suggesting the necessity of working outwardly, in all directions, from some great centre or centres, along the chief lines of social and commercial influence.

And it is curious to observe how, corresponding to this, the physical world has been prepared for the abode of man; for everywhere

we find the most admirable adaptation of its physical aspects and resources to the natural and even spiritual wants of the race. Over all the face of the earth, for example, we find a stupendous preparation for a complete system of water-works, in high mountain ranges and table lands, with corresponding depressions and declivities, not simply to supply the requisite moisture and fertility, but to bring the whole world into intimate social and spiritual relations. Apparently dividing mankind into hostile communities, the great oceans and seas actually bring them together, and form the highway of nations.

Within a narrower sphere, see how wonderfully linked the different parts of a country, and sometimes of different contiguous countries, by a network of beautiful inland seas, lakes, and rivers; so that the face of the earth is checkered by the great water-courses over which speed the commerce and population, the life and intelligence of mankind. Railroads, themselves, are mere appendages of rivers and oceans, to bring them into closer and more perfect connection. Around and through all lands, God has poured His tides, "where go the swift ships," freighted with merchandise, and not unfrequently, in these latter days, with the seed of truth to be sown broadcast on all heathen shores.

The Gospel, then, must be preached and its institutions planted beside all waters, amid crowded and busy populations, in all the great centres and avenues of life.

The method is to start from some chief points of influence, and advance along the streams and seas where men do most congregate, to proceed from land to land, systematically and orderly, as God shall direct, to take possession of the world. It is of little use to maintain a sort of guerilla warfare, with a few scattered tribes on the outskirts of society, while the great nations are left behind. Not from the circumference to the centre, but from the centre to the circumference, is the method of nature and of providence.

In this view, the procedure of Christ and His apostles is most instructive. He came from heaven freighted with immortal seed, which, in tears and blood and agony, He sowed in one of the chief centres of the world. Lying on the eastern shores of the "middle sea," between Europe on the one hand and Asia on the other, having Egypt and Africa on the south, and Rome on the west, Judea, insignificant in itself, formed a centre from which the seed of divine

truth spread on all the wings of the wind, on all the streams of time. Yonder you behold the Divine Redeemer on the banks of the sacred Jordan, anon in the city of Jerusalem; then by the shores of the lake of Galilee; then in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, by the shores of the Mediterranean, about the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. From the temple, according to the symbolic language of the prophet, flow the deepening and expanding waters of life, to diverse and distant seas.

The disciples of our Lord follow in His steps. After preaching and baptizing by all the streams of Palestine, we trace them around all the shores of the Mediterranean, the seat of ancient empires. Then we see them on the banks of the Ilissus and the Tiber, and afterwards on those of the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Elbe, where churches of Christ were planted about the close of the second century. On the other side of the world, we find them preaching and baptizing by Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, coasting around the whole of Asia the Less, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, and especially in those seats of ancient commerce, where Greeks, Jews, and barbarians, were gathered for business or pleasure, Antioch, Ephesus, and Smyrna. Soon after, we find them sowing the seed of the Kingdom by the water-courses of the Nile, in the cities of Carthage and Alexandria. They travelled far eastward to the banks of the Euphrates, by the shores of the Caspian sea, and some say, towards the close of the third or the fourth century, as far east as the Ganges. Monuments of their labors, in later times, have been found in Assyria, in the region of the Nestorians, in India, and even in China.

Thus the truth was spread "from the rivers to the ends of the earth"—from Palestine to Rome; from Rome to Gaul, Germany, and Spain; and thence to the Ultima Thulê of the British Isles. From England and Holland, it has come to this new world of the West, over which it has spread from the shores of the Atlantic, by the banks of the Merrimac and the Connecticut, to the Bay of New York and the lordly Hudson, whence it has gone, mainly by missionary labor, along the valley of the Mohawk, to the shores of Erie and Ontario, and thence far west to the Father of Waters. But not there alone, but farther and farther still, along all the lines of travel and business, until now the song of salvation mingles with the dash of the Pacific Ocean.

III. Our third question, *When are we to sow?* is easily answered. For, in the domain of religion, all times are seasons of sowing—at early morn and dewy eve, in spring-time and summer, in autumn and winter, alike.

True, indeed, there are certain grand transitional eras in the history both of individuals and of communities, which may be regarded, in a special sense, as their spring or seed-time.

Such was the era in which Christ and His apostles "filled the world with their doctrine." Such was the period of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. And is not the present, in nearly all lands, pre-eminently such a time?

Look around you and see! Is there a nation anywhere wholly closed against the truth? Is not the long winter of despotism even in heathen lands giving way? Is not the whole world somewhat awake, impressible, expectant? For the first time we can penetrate, with the seed of God, to the very depths of Africa. There is not a portion of India to which we cannot convey the Word of life. All Europe is in a transition state. Spring is stirring, amid the snows of winter, on the banks of the Danube, through the Alps of Switzerland and Italy, and among the vinefields of Etruria and France. The cold winds of tyranny and priestcraft may check the progress of spring, and throw it back apparently into the bosom of winter; but waters are gathering in the hills, soft winds are stealing through the valleys; once more the frosts will dissolve, the torrents will sweep from the mountains and roll over the plains. France, Germany, and even Italy, will yet rejoice in the summer of freedom and hope.

And what shall I say of this "free land" of ours, with its teeming myriads and throbbing life?

O! never in the history man was there a season of such wondrous movement and promise as the present. The nations, aroused and agitated by the new forces of discovery and revolution, of scientific and commercial development, of free thought and daring enterprise, everywhere invite the labors and prayers of the church. The enemy too is up and busy at the rising and the setting sun, sowing tares over all the open fields. Even in India, as well as in Europe and in this country, infidelity and superstition are at their work of death, and, if the hosts of God are not watchful and diligent, will darken the face of the earth. Let none then draw back, let none slacken

in the glorious work of sowing the seed of God beside all waters. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thou thy hand; for thou canst not tell which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both shall be alike good."

IV. This naturally brings us to our next but not least important question, *How are we to sow?* Patiently and perseveringly, of course every one will say; for in what great enterprise are these qualities more imperatively needed? Years, ages, may roll by before the glorious harvest; but it will come at last. "Ye have need of patience;" for the spring is often cold and backward, and even tempestuous. "Little by little" was the motto of a great scholar, and little by little will the season advance, and little by little must the seed be sown beside all waters.

But not only patiently and perseveringly, but generously and bountifully, with some due proportion to the zeal that animates our heart, and the sublime results to be achieved. The "Expect great things from God," in Carey's immortal sermon, was followed by its counterpart—"Attempt great things for God." It would be absurd to go forth to the conquest of a great country with one or two straggling battalions and a few rusty cannon! What folly to sow a bushel of corn in a thousand-acre field! But, alas! are we not sometimes, in this grand enterprise of occupying the world with the religion of Christ, about as foolish as this? How slender and inadequate our means; how meagre and thinly scattered our seed! A few handfuls here and there, most precious I grant, and occasionally ripening abundantly in the far wilderness; but this is not the sowing beside *all* waters, which is to fill the world with the glory of the Lord.

The Lord loveth a cheerful giver; He loveth also a cheerful, free-hearted worker, who, with noble generosity, scatters broadcast the seed of life beside all waters. "Freely ye have received, freely give." He that hoards corn when it is needed for sowing, deserves a double curse; for he inflicts a double injury. Open then the granaries stored with the sacred treasure, and let the Word of life be scattered freely in all lands, and in due time the harvest will "shake like Lebanon."

Hence, in conclusion, we linger a moment upon the *blessedness* of such a course. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." Twice blessed! nay, thrice and four times blessed! Blessed in the heart; for that, in its generous quality, is a perrennial fountain of joy; blessed

in the sympathy and gratitude of others; blessed in the work itself, a work in which angels might share; and blessed in the hope of the harvest to come.

Though it is the springtime, oft bleak and cheerless, work for God is ever a joy. The life, energy, movement, of such a season, are themselves a compensation. The idler and pleasure seeker is the unhappy man. The laborer, "a-field at early morn," ploughing on the mountain's side, "in glory and in joy," or scattering the golden seed in the fruitful meadows, has no time to be wretched. He sows in hope also; and in the sphere of religion, it often happens that the sower overtakes the reaper—nay, becomes the reaper—while sowers and reapers rejoice together. Ah! what glorious sheaves are gathered even now in the fields of toil! "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall come again, bringing his sheaves with him." Even at the close of life's weary day, the sower has wept tears of joy as he gazed upon the fair harvest waving before his eyes. "The wilderness and the solitary place are made glad, the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose." Who can describe the thrill of sacred delight which passed through the frame of the dying Boardman, when, borne upon a litter, he gazed upon the Karen converts going down to the river to be baptized in the name of Jesus? The death of Gordon Hall, far from kindred and home, was like the coronation of a king. His last words were a sort of triumphal shout: "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!"

And what shall I say of the last harvest, the final coming and kingdom of the Lord? "The harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels;" and the result, unnumbered myriads of glorified spirits. "For the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Then the sea shall give up the dead that are in it—the silent wilderness and solitary graveyard among the mountains, or by the lone heathen river, the once populous city, and the open field, shall give up the dead that are in them. They shall come, myriads upon myriads from all lands, and from all seas, beautiful as angels and expectant of glory. For the seed of God has ripened, and the last field is reaped. Earth's weary sowers are there; but oh! how changed, how glorified, as they mingle with the happy throng ascending "the shining way," chanting with angels the song of the

harvest! In many mingling tones as of a great multitude from all lands, singing the one song—"Worthy is the Lamb to receive honor and glory and blessing."

Ah! well may we say, as by faith we descry them from afar, "Who are these, and whence come they?" Lo, these are they—the Lord's sowers, blessed reapers now—who, in toil and tears, scattered seed by all waters; and having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are now before the throne of God, and praise Him night and day in His temple. Yonder is Luther with his Germans singing, Gloria in Excelsis! Yonder is Carey with his Hindoos, and among them Krishnu Paul, singing as of old,

"Oh thou, my soul, forget no more
The friend who all thy sorrows bore!"

Yonder too is Judson with his Burmans, glorious now as angels of God, and around them, and stretching far away among "the shining ones," many dear forms long missed on earth, now glorified in the heavens. Tears, anguish, death, all forgotten, swallowed up and lost in the joy of the harvest. Happy sowers! Happy reapers! Blessed are ye that have sown beside all waters!

Rouse thee then, oh my brother! to the sublime work! Onward! right onward! thou man of God, sowing immortal seed beside all waters—

"And thou an angel's happiness shalt know;
The good begun by thee shall onward flow,
In many a branching stream, and wider grow.
The seed, that in these few and fleeting years,
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall spring to life in amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in heaven's immortal bowers."

L. Murray

THE CHURCH THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

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That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—1 *Timothy*, iii, 15.

The history of Timothy is one of deep interest. Although a native of Lystra, and the son of a Greek father, he was piously and prayerfully trained, from his youth, by his mother and grandmother, who were pious Jewish women. Under the preaching of Paul, he became a convert to Christianity—entered the ministry—and became a noted Evangelist. Although of feeble constitution, his gifts were eminent, and he was a "faithful fellow-worker" with Paul, who loved him as a son, and who calls him his "dear son in the faith." After performing many services, he was left by Paul at Ephesus, for the purpose of organizing and instructing the converts to the faith in that city, for which duty he possessed a great fitness. Yet, he was comparatively young, and was not possessed of that breadth of experience which was needful to meet all the cases that might arise; and, hence, the first and second letters to him of his father in the faith, which form so rich a legacy to the ministry and to the church, in which he instructs, directs, and exhorts him, as to the right performance of his duties as an Evangelist. The apostle felt that his return to Ephesus might not be as soon as he desired; and he wrote to him, that, if detained, he might "know how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

And our object in the present discourse is to illustrate a few of

the truths embraced in this comprehensive, but often misinterpreted, passage of Scripture.

I. Our text speaks of the church.

"Which is the church of the living God." Definite and scriptural ideas on the constitution of the church of Christ would have prevented many of the evils that have attended its progress, and would now extinguish much of that narrow and sectarian bigotry which so often arrays those in opposition to one another, who are looking to the same Saviour for salvation.

There is a common and almost universally recognised distinction, which divides the church into the visible, and the invisible. Among the Jews, the visible church was composed of all the descendants of Abraham—the invisible, only of those who truly loved the Lord. So, in these Christian times, the visible church is composed of all who profess the true religion, and their children; and the invisible, of those who truly believe in Christ, and have been moulded into His image. As the grains of gold are hid amid the baser earths—as the grains of wheat are hid amid the chaff—so the true people of God are hid among those who make an external profession of His name. And whilst the external organization and profession are requisite, yet is it true that "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love."

From this general statement it must be quite obvious that those who profess the true religion are not separated from the visible church by any peculiarity which they may adopt. Though different branches of the church may take unto themselves distinctive names descriptive of their peculiarities, they are not, therefore, separated from the visible body of believers. Though the Jews were divided into different tribes, having distinctive names and localities, they were all the tribes of Israel. Though the race to which we belong is divided into tribes, and kindreds, and tongues, all possessing peculiar customs and habits, yet all these kindreds and tongues belong to the human family. And so the various denominations of men who profess the true religion, although differing in many things from one another, form component parts of the visible church. And those are wholesale schismatics who claim to be the entire visible church, and who admit to connection with it only those who submit to their claims, whether put forth on papal, prelatical, or sacramental grounds.

Equally plain is it, that all those belong to the invisible church,

who, in heart and life, are conformed to the will of God. It is not the badge we wear, nor the name by which we are called, nor the way in which we administer or submit to ordinances, nor the church authority to which we yield obedience, but the image of Christ enstamped upon the soul, that gives us a name and a place among those who are the people of God upon earth, and who will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. So that the church visible is composed of all who profess the true religion, and their children; and the church invisible, of all who truly possess it. Let any individual, rejecting these views, go out in search of the church, and, like the visionary in pursuit of the philosopher's stone, he is in search of an object he will never find, and will in all probability take up with something which has the least possible claim to it. It is the way of God, with those who reject the simple truth, to give them up to strong delusion to believe a lie. When men reject the truth, they soon become fiery zealots for a fiction.

II. This church is the house of God.

"That thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God." The tabernacle in the wilderness, and, after it was taken down, the temple, was called the house or the habitation of God, because there the symbol of the divine presence resided. And whilst under our dispensation no material building is called the house of God, yet the language is applied in figure to the church of God, as we have just explained it: believers in Christ, joined together for His worship according to the forms of the Gospel. Of this the following passage is the proof and illustration, in which Paul thus addresses himself to the converts from the Gentiles: "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye are also builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians, ii, 20, 21.) The material temple at Jerusalem was a type of the spiritual church; and as that rose from its elevated foundations laid on the rock, stone after stone, and plank after plank, to its completeness and magnificent perfection, so the spiritual church rises, by the continued conversion of sinners, and the progressive sanctification of believers, and is growing up unto an holy temple in the Lord. And every believer, like the stones and

timbers of a building, conduces to the growth, the stability, and the proportions, of the house. The wall must not say to the roof, nor the roof to the wall, I have no need of thee. The polished corner-stone must not say to the lesser stones that are hidden in the foundations, or in the centre of walls, "I have no need of thee." Each is needful to the stability and the perfection of the whole. All are fitly framed together; and the building is rising to its glorious completion by the additions making to it of every believer. This house of God is rising from age to age, and will only be completed in glory.

III. This house is the church of the living God.

"Which is the church of the living God." Here, it may be, the church of the living God is placed in significant contrast with the dead idols of the heathen. Timothy was in Ephesus, where was the magnificent temple of Diana, and where was the miraculous image which all the world worshipped. There stood the image in its magnificent abode, without life, sense, or motion; dead as the wood, or the stone, from which it was made; and without any power of imparting any benefit to its world of worshippers. It saw not their sins—it heard not the cries of their pagan revelry—the fermenting corruption of their hearts, it knew not; and whatever chastisement they deserved, it had no hand to inflict them. The image was polished, and beautiful, but it was dead. And the idols and gods of the heathen are all dead. And the living God, whose centre is everywhere, and His circumference nowhere, stands out in the broadest contrast with these. Having life in Himself, He is uncreated, but He is the fountain of life to all beings. He gives life, and breath, and all things, to His creatures. It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being. As the living God, He is everywhere present, and sends out the pulsations of life to the most remote fibres of His own infinite creation. And especially, as the God of grace, is He the author of eternal life to all who believe. The temple of Solomon was constructed of dead stones and timbers; and so was the temple of Diana, and all the temples of heathenism. But "the house of God," "the church of the living God," is built up of living stones, and living timbers. God's spiritual house is constructed of those whom He has made spiritually alive. He is the living God—and the materials of His house are all alive unto Him. He enters His house, not like a pagan or papal priest parading his embroideries and vest-

ments amid lifeless walls, and beams, and pillars, and paintings, and statuary; but like a father coming among his own living children, loving and embracing all, and loved and embraced of all. He comes, the living God, into a living temple, to impart new life to all who compose it, that they may be co-workers with Him to extend spiritual life throughout our world, which is dead in trespasses and sins.

The heathen serve dumb idols, but ours is the living God. He sees our faults—He marks our sins—He hears our complaints—He knows our hearts. But He is our Father—He has for us a father's heart. And His church, from its foundations, up, up, to the topmost stone, should be alive unto Him. Thus may His church be alive unto Him!

IV. The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth.

The words which we render "pillar and ground" are nearly identical in meaning; or they may be interpreted so as simply to give intensity to the word pillar—as a very strong pillar, an unfailing pillar—a pillar that cannot be moved, so strong are its foundations, and so strongly is it built.

We will not weary you with detail as to the interpretations given to the word "pillar," and as to the variety of opinions as to what it refers. Because Timothy was left in Ephesus to preach, defend, and support the truth, some would make him the pillar. Whilst, in a high sense, he was a pillar, as is every true minister of the Word, yet, were Timothy now living, he would promptly decline the honor which these interpreters would confer upon him. Others would make God the pillar; but whilst He is the pillar and ground of the universe, a true interpretation forbids this. Others would make "the mystery of Godliness," in the subsequent verse, the pillar; but this would require a new arrangement of the entire passage. We believe the true meaning to be, that which lies on the very face of the text, that the church, not the church of Rome, not the church of England, not the church of Scotland, not any particular church, but the church of the living God, made up of all the true churches of Christ throughout our world, is the pillar and ground of the truth; and that glorious church is here brought out in contrast with the temple of the lifeless image of Diana, which was the pillar and the support of falsehood, idolatry, and vice.

In the porch of the temple of Solomon were two magnificent pil-

lars, between which the worshippers entered into the splendid interior. The one was called Jachin, the other, Boaz; and it is said that upon these pillars the prophets hung up all their prophecies, written upon parchment, that they might be read by all who entered the temple to worship. May it not be to this the apostle alludes in our text? And if so, how beautifully it illustrates the way and manner in which the church is the pillar and ground of the truth! It is to hold up the truth of God, to be known and read of all men!

The temples of the heathen were splendid structures, as is proved by those of them which yet remain, and by the ruins of others. Who can even now wander amid their ruins without being awe-struck with their magnitude and beauty, ere they were crushed by the ruthless hand of barbarism! These temples were crowded with pillars supporting their ample roof, some of which are models in architecture to the present day! Upon these pillars the laws and edicts of kings, and emperors, and governments, were hung, to be read by the people! And when the people desired to know the laws and edicts to which their attention and obedience were required, they resorted to the pillars in the temples which held them up for their perusal. May it not be to this the apostle alludes in our text? And if so, how beautifully it illustrates the way and manner in which the church is the pillar and ground of the truth! It is to hold forth the truth of God, to be read and known of all men! And we are confident, as to the essential truth, that here we have the mind of the Spirit in our text. The church, not the church papal, not the church protestant, nor any branch or segment of either, but the church catholic, composed of all who profess the true religion, is the pillar and ground of the truth.

Let this be accepted, and then, in view of the illustrations just given, there are some weighty truths that follow.

1. *The pillar neither makes nor modifies the laws.* These are enacted by supreme authority, and were hung on the pillars to be read by the people. So the church has no right to make new laws, or to modify those already given by God. The law of the Lord is perfect, and it must be preserved from all additions or subtractions; and the one simple duty of the church is to hold forth the laws of the King of Zion, in their purity, to be known and read of all men! If this principle is surrendered, our religious liberty is gone—for religious liberty consists in refusing to submit to any authority but

that of God—in refusing to receive, as of divine authority, anything not plainly taught in the Bible. Would that all contrivers and lovers of novelties, who are acting on the supposition that the law of the Lord is not perfect, might remember this!

2. *The pillar gives no efficacy to the laws.* It cannot make men read them, nor believe them, nor obey them. It holds them up, and then men disobey them at their peril. So the church gives no efficacy to the truth; that is the work of the Spirit; and all pretension to such power must go into the category of old wives' fables. We regard it not merely as pretentious and deceptive, but as blasphemous. The simple mission of the church is—and it is a glorious mission—to hold up the truth, and the whole truth. The power which gives it efficacy is from God. The church has to prophecy to the dry bones, and then to pray, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

3. *Nor can the pillar suppress the laws of the King, and put up others in their place, as more conducive to the good of the subject.* This would be virtually calling into question the authority of the King, and dethroning Him; as the power which repeals, modifies, or enacts the laws, is the supreme power. And this is the crying, horrible sin of Rome, and which subjects it to the curse of anathema, maranatha. It hides the truth from the people, and teaches them, for doctrines, the commandments of men. It puts up a pillar of its own, and, putting aside the revelation of God, it covers that pillar with its own teachings; many of which it is as difficult to comprehend as the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and when understood they are contemptibly frivolous, and only deserving a place with the bones of St. Quietus.

4. *The truth which the pillar is to hold up for universal perusal is not any formulary of doctrine of human contrivance.* These are very well in their place; and we favor creeds and confessions because they embody the great truths which the different branches of the church receive as the teachings of the Scripture. Nor have we ever known any violently opposed to them, but the propagators of error, to whose success they opposed strong barriers. Yet it is not these symbols, but the revelations of the Spirit by prophets and apostles, as contained in the Bible, which the church is to hold forth. Symbols are nothing, but as they are based upon the revelations of God; they are worse than nothing, when they either oppose, pervert, or

obscure them. And by preserving the Scriptures in their integrity—by preserving their doctrines and institutions from corruption—by transmitting them from age to age in their original purity—by truthful translations of them into the tongues of all people—by her efforts to send the Bible, and the ministers of God to preach it, to all the tribes and kindreds of the earth—the church of the living God has shown and is now showing itself to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

These are all weighty truths, and of the highest importance to the being of the church, and to the well being of the race. The highest temporal and spiritual interests of man are interwoven with the perfect purity, and the entire freedom, and the universal circulation, of the truth of God.

Now, the application of all this is important and obvious.

1. *It settles the questions as to what is the church, and where is the church.* In its visible form, it is composed of those who profess the true faith—in its invisible, of all those truly collected unto Christ. Nor is it confined to the domains of popery, prelacy, or presbytery; it is composed of all who receive and practice the truth. The most obscure believer on earth is a part of it—and wherever a family, or a body of faithful men, are assembled for the worship of God, there it is in form, and in spirit, and in reality. The individual in whom the Spirit dwells is a temple of God; and there may be a church in the family, as well as in the city, or in the state. These are the true answers as to, What is the church? And where is the church? In no other way have the questions been ever answered, worthy the regard of an intelligent mind.

2. *It defines the simple duty of the church.* That duty is to hold forth and to hold up the simple truth as it is in Jesus, to be known and read of all men. Behold those pillars in the temple at Jerusalem, covered with parchments containing the Will of God, as revealed to the prophets, and daily surrounded by multitudes of anxious readers! There is symbolized the duty of the entire church. It is to hold forth and to hold up the Word of life! Oh that the heart of the church, and of its entire ministry, might be impressed with this great truth, so that we may cease from sectarian strife, and from questions that tend to no profit, and from modes of reform which only aggravate the evils they mean to remedy, and cause the conflicting passions of men to swell and foam like the waves of the sea

in a storm; and that we may turn our entire energies to the spreading of the knowledge of the truth to the ends of the earth. Let the dead bury the dead, but the one duty of the ministry is to preach the Gospel. God's truth is the great rectifier of all error and of all evils. This alone purifies the heart. All other reformations are but partial and apparent, like the skin drawn over the cancerous sore, whilst its fiery roots are spreading within. Ephraim must cease vexing Judah, and Judah Ephraim, about questions as to the mint, anise, and cummin; and both must give themselves to the holding forth the Word of life to all people.

And what is the duty of the church in the aggregate, is the duty of every member of it. If the church may be compared to a temple, then may its every member be compared to a pillar in that temple. Some of these stand in the porch, some around the altars, some in very obscure corners; but the duty of them all is to hold up and to hold forth the Word of truth. Think not that this noblest work is confined to the pulpit. It is the device of hell to divide the church into castes, and to authorize only the few to preach Christ crucified, and to forbid others to tell those perishing around them of the way of life. The Sabbath-school teacher—the obscure mother, with her children grouped around her, and with her Bible on her knee—the friend who deals faithfully with the soul of his friend—the young men banded together for works of benevolence and mercy—these, no less than the minister, are co-workers with God, are holding forth the Word of life. You may be poor and obscure, and hold no rank in the church; but may not a private in the army fight as valiantly for his country as the officer that commands? May he not die fighting for the colors which he may not carry? If it is not his business to train recruits, he may enlist them. And to this work of enlisting recruits for the Cross, the Gospel calls all who are looking to the Cross for salvation. "The Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The Master hath need of the active service of all His people. Multitudes, even in our most highly-favored places, are dying in their sins; and though every minister were as a flaming fire, and every preacher a Whitefield, they could not overtake the great work before them. And no person should be considered as converted, unless so converted as to take a living, loving interest in the conversion of

others. The great, grand, glorious duty of the church, and of its every member, from the minister to the most obscure member, is to hold forth the Word of life. When the church and its entire membership shall be thus the pillar and ground of the truth, the morn of the millennial day has already risen upon our world; and the shout will be soon heard rising from earth to heaven, and echoed back again from the heavens to earth, hallelujah, salvation, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

FRUITS A TEST OF SYSTEMS.

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Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.—*Matthew*, vii, 20.

The history of the human mind is a history of struggle and doubt. Goaded on to ceaseless effort by the insatiable thirst of knowledge, yet ever beset with mystery, it is always essaying, never satisfied; forever asking what is truth, never content with the answer. Time furnishes no spectacle of equal sublimity with this huge, agonizing, ages-enduring endeavor; the grand and imposing results in material achievements become insignificant in the comparison. The forms carved in stone, and the structures built out of it, curious combinations of matter in the department of mechanic arts and inventions, and the subjugation of material forces to the useful purposes of life, are, to be sure, great and noble exponents of human power; but it is to the moral department, in the pursuit of the unknown, in the struggle with doubt, in the unyielding and restless impatience of mystery, in the deathless pertinacity of determination, in which all the great minds of the earth have been exercised—the fathers dying unsuccessful, transmitting the heritage to the sons—it is *here* that humanity stands forth in its utmost sublimity; the sublimity of persistent toil, amid all defeat; of continued hope, amid all discouragement; of united aim, despite antagonizing measures; of sea-wide and world-enduring pursuit, in the face of all failures; the sublimity of mind warring against limitation, overwhelmed and driven back in every onset, yet emerging from every new defeat with more unconquerable purpose, and hastening to the conflict with augmented heroism. Here contended and here were defeated the Attic sages; here are the tombs of their Latin disciples; here rallied the elder

and later champions of the orient, and here are their sepulchres; here, in a later day, and on to our time, assembled and contended the occidental savans, and here are their new-made graves. And yet the effort is continued.

It will never end. Each age, on through time, will repeat it. Eternity—who dare say what lies in that abyss of mystery? Shall the finite ever come to the infinite, and so the sublime struggle cease, or shall the separating gulf remain, and the awful agony progress, deepening forever, as the profounder questions are disclosed, and more august problems are brought to view? The utmost possible to the finite, perhaps, is to push out the boundaries of thought, widening the sphere of certitude, but never reaching the limits of truth; a progress which, in some sense, is no progress, as the limited, however extended, approximates not at all to the unlimited. After all attainable knowledge, the infinite will still remain unknown, and doubt and mystery still hover around the dim, distant horizon of thought, beckoning on the ever-thirsting, ever-restless mind. There, amid those awful shades, dwells the infinite. There is the realm of faith; the realm where, the light of reason failing, the finite must bow to the infinite, and receive upon authority what it has, unaided, no means of verifying or power of comprehending; the realm where much that is matter of faith now, will, as the finite expands, become matter of knowledge hereafter.

But is there no means of certitude here, and now? Must we be baffled forever? Are there no tests by which we can know the truth, and be delivered from the thraldom of doubt? With what agony every thoughtful mind has repeated the question for the thousandth time! The answer is, yes; no. Which, yes or no, depends upon the subject. Many questions lie wholly in the realm of the unknown and unthinkable; upon them, ingenious minds may speculate forever, and attain no nearer to certitude; amid these unintelligibles are the battle-grounds of the philosophers—have been, and will be for ages to come. All practical subjects allow of certitude; but even here, certainty is not always the result of the mind's unaided action. We believe upon authority; we are certain that we have the truth; not because we distinctly know the truth itself, but because we are assured of the entire reliability of the authority upon which we receive it.

But how may we know amid so many conflicting authorities, what

is truth? One says, lo! here; another, lo! there. Whom shall we follow?

Distracted inquirer, are you honest? Would you find the truth? Are you perplexed whom to follow, and anxious lest you go astray? Hear the words of Jesus; he suggests a test to you; one which the most unskillful may apply, and which is infallible.

The method is short and practical: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

There are other tests—this is the most available and simple. Philosophy is useful—there are ultimate criteria of truth; but this is the sum of all. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." The labyrinths of evidence may be too intricate; the import of doctrines too obscure, too profound; truth too inaccessible for the common mind. This rule lies level with the feeblest capacity. The scheme may not be understood—the theory may be incomprehensible; the fruit is patent.

Wisely did the great Master supply His disciples with this easy and infallible test. It is our wisdom, amid all the confusion and uncertainty of debate and polemical strife, to remember it. Under the blinding influence of passion, and beset with the weaknesses of finite and limited powers, our logic often limps, and our reason turns to unreason; but "grapes do never grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles."

We do not ignore reason, nor deny it its appropriate place in the investigation of truth; we would not prejudice its full and free play; but we insist that reason is never more reason, never more like itself, than when, whatever other rule it employs on moral questions, it falls back upon that which is furnished here as primary and ultimate.

No evidence can show that to be truth whose legitimate working is evil, nor the opposite. Honoring, and holding in the highest estimation, then, all the kinds and variety of evidence by which mind is led to moral truth, and especially joying in the fullness and abundance of that proof which God has been pleased to array in support of His own revelation; proof comprising a long line of most illustrious prophecies, with innumerable miracles the most brilliant and indubitable, alike the utterances of a supernatural and divine agent; proof interwoven with the entire chain of human history, and

overspreading the whole scope of the race; proof internal and external, beaming on its pages and inscribed on monuments, speaking from the earth and the heaven; proof which for variety and fullness has never been equalled in any other case; rejoicing, as we do in the wisdom and goodness of God, which in this has left all men without excuse to whom His revelation comes, we yet turn away from all others, to this one proof for the present—the proof arising from the fruits of the system.

Let us proceed, then, to apply this test principle to the various systems propounded by men, and inviting the acceptance of their fellows.

By fruits, is meant effects; effects produced by the system in the minds and in the external lives of those who come within its influence; effects extending from the individual to society; all the effects resulting from the system, upon the inward and outward life of individuals and communities.

It is postulated that truth is good; that it is good working and benign; that, so far as it characterizes a system, the system will have a tendency to make men wiser and purer and happier, to diminish the evils and multiply the blessings of society, to improve individual character, to elevate the masses, to ameliorate the asperities of life, to invigorate mind with high and noble aims, and in every possible way to sweeten and sanctify all relations, and render the earth, what it was designed to be, the sanctuary of virtue, the abode of happiness, and the ante-chamber of heaven. Any system producing such effects is shown to be good, and of God; it is the good tree attested by its precious fruits. Any system or separate idea tending in the opposite direction must be condemned as evil, and as emanating from the father of lies, whose impress it bears.

But obvious as the principle is, and easy of application, some precaution may be needed in its use.

No series of ideas, related as a system of doctrines, that has ever yet been conceived by man, is either wholly true, or wholly false. In the best, there are some traces of human imperfection; in the most vicious, there is some truth. The same is true of their effects. Even the divine system, which is perfect in itself, is never so in the finite conception. Hence, the extent to which the principle can apply is to show the general character of the system, condemning or approving it as a whole, and not in every minute part. Minute

differences may exist between systems of the same general complexion, and harmony on inferior grounds between those fundamentally adverse. It results that the elements of truth are not so directly attested separately, if indeed they are attested at all, by the effects flowing from systems, as the general system itself.

A further precaution required is, that as each minute element of doctrine is not verified by the effects of several related doctrines, so a system is not to be adjudged by some single effect which seems to flow from it, or by several unusual effects. A good and wholesome law, impinging on a vicious state of society, or, simply, the publication of a most humane and beautiful sentiment, may become the occasion of alarming riots and bloodshed; the proclamation of liberty may instigate rebellion against oppressive thrones; the coming of Christ, and His benign ministries, may evoke the instruments of cruel and inhuman persecutions; these incidental results may not, therefore, be attributed to their several antecedents, as their legitimate effects, but must rather be traced to the malignant resistance of deep-seated evils.

Again, as a system of doctrine is not to be judged by some accidental effect, so neither is it responsible for its abuse or misapplication or perversion. If zeal without knowledge lead to persecution, it will not prove that it is bad to be zealously affected for a good thing; if much learning sometimes puffeth up and engendereth vain disputings, it will not invalidate the truth that knowledge is to be desired, or that for the soul to be without knowledge is an evil; if charity at times extenuates wrong, and withholds the punishment that is due, thereby endangering the well-being of the innocent, it will not show that it is not better than all burnt sacrifices; if, because of the long-suffering of God, the hearts of the sons of men are often set in them to do evil, it will not show that mercy can have no place in the bosom of Divinity.

Finally, a system must not be supposed always to be represented by the character of its expounders and defenders, or its effects be judged of by either their follies or virtues. A good cause may have the misfortune to have bad advocates, and most ruinous falsehood receive, through ignorance, the support of good and virtuous adherents. The doctrines of Jesus will suffer no tarnish by the avarice and treachery of Iscariot; though the devil, as an angel of light, should preach remission of sins through the crucified, it would be

none the less truth from heaven. No doctrine or scheme can be justly implexed with the virtues or villianies of its supporters, further than, by uniformity of the association, it can be shown to be identical with and the cause of the peculiar character of its defenders. The rule is, that men have a moral likeness to the doctrines they embrace and advocate, espousing them because of sympathy, or transformed by them; but the doctrine must be tested by a fair and candid view of its legitimate effects, as they are seen invariably and by natural sequence flowing from it, when it is carried out.

Bearing in our memories these and similar precautions, let us now proceed to apply our test to a few of the leading systems which have, from time immemorial, put forth their claims among men; schemes which are yet found lying out broadly upon the mind of the world.

Let the examination begin with Atheism.

Atheism is the scheme which denies God, and by consequence all religious ideas. Basing itself on the assumption that there is no kind of being but matter, and that all changes, which are but varieties of shifting forms, are produced by inhering forces guided by no intelligence, it ignores all ideas of accountability except to the self-imposed laws of the majority or the most powerful; discards as a mere fiction the distinction between right and wrong; finds all good to consist in the gratification of the animal nature, since there is no other; and, orphaning the universe, abandons it to merciless and meaningless fate.

Having dethroned God, and imbruted man in its creed, it would in its practice abolish forever all the symbols of religious thought and all the sanctuaries of religious worship. In the world, where it should prevail, there would be no temple—no prayer—no Sabbath, with its hallowed rites—no morning song of praise—no evening hymn of thanksgiving. In its spring-time, when flowers bloom; and its summer, when fruits mellow; and in its amber-tinted autumn, when the falling leaves fill the mind with saddened thoughts of departing life; and in the winter drear, when outward cold enkindles inward warmth of glowing sympathy; over its slaving and toiling and hopeless millions, a dark death pall would eternally brood. Death! how unmitigated must be its horrors, in such a world, with no lights kindling on the further shore! no gleam of hope to illume the darkness of the grave! What a sorrowful world it would be! Orphaned, bereaved, and uncomforted! No Father above! no hope within!

To my own mind it suggests an awful midnight, amid whose darkness, storms wail, and lightnings bicker, and thunders roll, and men stand shivering with fright—a midnight, stretching on through ages, without a star, without a morning! In such a world, every look should be a tear, every breath a sob; a funereal sorrow should fill every bosom, and insupportable anguish break every heart.

This is the system. On whatever philosophy it reposes, these are its dismal contents. It has been circulating in the world for ages, seeking to gain credence among men; and is yet, limitedly it is true, but assiduously, putting forth its claims the earth over. It is entrenched among us, and has its juntos in all the considerable centres of the land, who are secretly, but industriously and fatally, propagating its detestable dogmas.

What are its fruits? It requires but little insight of the springs of human action to perceive what they must necessarily be. What they are, is to be seen in the sentiments and lives of those who have come under its influence, and in the state of society where it has prevailed. Once or twice, in the sad history of the world, they have appeared on a gigantic scale. Wherever it has obtained, the utmost demoralization has prevailed. Its votaries have uniformly become the most debased of mankind. In its polluted soil has grown up, with rank luxuriance, every abominable crime. Fidelity, chastity, domestic love, honor, friendship, patriotism, philanthropy, and every virtue which ornaments our nature, blight and die under its leprous breath. Lechery and prostitution, and robbery and murder, spring up like poisonous fungi amid its death-engendering shades. Once in the life of man it enthroned itself in a single nation. France accepted it as her dismal creed. Immediately the realm became a seething sea of blood. Society rushed into disorganization. Millions perished in a few months by assassination and violence. Men, maddened and intoxicated by the hellish potation, rioted in carnage. Had the reign of terror continued for twenty years, the nation, the most enlightened on earth, would have been not reduced to barbarism merely, but absolutely exterminated, or reduced to a miserable remnant of demonized men, devouring and destroying each other. What was the result in this atrocious instance, would be the result universally, were the scheme accepted by mankind. The race could not exist under its dreadful sway, or only exist in fragments, harrowed and harrowing each other with eternal war. The family, the

church, the state, arts, sciences, commerce, and civilization, would alike be an impossibility. An organized government of Atheists cannot exist. All institutions and common interests sink before it as the rush before the tempest. Even the sexes, held together by the strongest natural bond, could subsist only in a commerce of lust; and paternity, robbed of all the natural instincts, becoming an insufferable burden, would be associated with general infanticide, as was the case in the appalling instance referred to—the offspring of revolting lust would but furnish the victims of unnatural murder.

Such are the fruits of Atheism—by them let it be tried. Let it stand forth surrounded with its hideous growth—its profusion of desolation—its dethroned and decapitated God—its imbruted and materialized humanity—its dismantled temples and altars and fanes—its demolished governments and shattered and roofless homes—its bleared and bloody and lecherous men—its dishonored, prostituted, and defiled women—its beggared and starving and abandoned children; let it stand forth amid its abominations and horrors of sin and shame, full to the brim of all manner of loathsomeness; and let men judge of it by its fruits. Who shall plead its cause? Surely the world wants not Atheism. There are woes enough without it. He is an enemy who abets it. Everything prized and lovely resents it as inimical. O Atheism! thou remorseless monster, thou direst child of perdition, who can think of thee without a shudder? Self-condemned, get thee back to the dark abyss out of which thou didst emanate with cursings and blasphemies! The world wants thee not.

Let the test next be applied to Deism.

Deism is that system of religous faith, or rather unfaith, which recognises God, but discards the Christian revelation. It makes a great account of natural, but wholly ignores revealed, religion. Its Bible is nature—its interpreter, unaided human reason. Its God is afar off, and inaccessible to mortals; who, having created the world, has abandoned it to the operation of fixed laws, and no more intermeddles with its affairs. To these laws men, in common with all other creatures, are accountable. From their penalties there is no escape. There is no compassion or mercy in the divine nature. Prayer is unprofitable, worship meaningless and vain. Man may be immortal or not. The future may be happy or miserable.

This is the system. It is not so dreadful as Atheism, for it contains some truth; but it is only less frightful. It makes no provis-

ion for human sin—has no alleviation for human sorrow. Amid the darkness of time, it leaves man without a guide, without a Saviour, without a hope—the victim of doubt and guilt and despair. It tells him, indeed, that God is, and that nature is, and that sin is; and then abandons him with these awful convictions to work out his dubious destiny. It reads him beautiful lessons from the stars and the earth and the flowers, but it brings him no tidings of Jesus or Calvary. It philosophizes of laws and forces, and stands in awe before the dread and august tokens of eternal power, but it brings no messages from His throne. It gives the universe a Creator, but leaves it without a Father. Like Atheism, it has no temple; for its God will not hear prayer; no Saviour, no atonement, no sabbath, no sacraments, no promises; no renewing Comforter. Upon the great problem of destiny it has no light.

What are its fruits? What can they be but a harvest of despair? For sin it has no cure, for sorrow no solace, for the yearnings and cravings of our nature no relief. It is a boastful system, calling itself by ambitious names, and bearing itself loftily before men, and the young especially are wooed to embrace it, as a substitute for the abused and discarded Bible. A long list of brilliant minds are enumerated among its admirers, and some of the finest literature in the realm of poetry celebrates its praise; it fascinates by its boldness, and contempt of authority, and freedom from restraints and the turmoils of conscience; it is a short method to silence all troublesome ideas of duty and all corroding reproaches; it disposes in a very summary way of many sayings hard to be received; it says, eat and drink, for to-morrow you die. Honeyed words—but, after all, what are its fruits? Are they not dreadful to contemplate? This boastful system, is it not a land barren and bloomless as the shades of death? What does it give in the place of what it takes from us? It robs us of our Father in Heaven, of our Saviour, of our Sanctifier, of our Bible, of our sabbath, of our altars, of hope concerning our dead. It gives us, in the place, a cold, distant, unsympathizing God, a dreary world, a dark grave, a hopeless future—nothing to live for but sin, nothing to look to but annihilation. It smothers every generous sentiment, stifles every noble aspiration, and spreads the blight of death over every divine and heavenly sympathy of our nature. Less appalling than sheer Atheism, it is but another ward in the same great pest-house; less loathsome, it is scarcely less deadly.

Let its friends point out a single beneficent influence it exerts, a solitary good it has ever done! Where are its trophies? Whom has it made better? What family has it redeemed? Show us the nation or people who have been blessed by its sway! There are no such trophies. Its fruits are fruits of death. The world wants it not.

Let the test be applied to Pantheism.

Pantheism is the scheme which resolves all things into God. God is the universe, and the universe is God. God is the substance alike of matter and of spirit; and all phenomena are but the unfolding of Himself, and in no way distinct from Himself. Observe, the theory is, not that things exist in God, by means of His power, as exponents of His thought, but that they are nothing different from Himself. There never has been, and never can be, anything other than God. Extension is extension of God; all forms in objectivity are forms of God; all material qualities are qualities of God; the substance of which these qualities and modes are predicated is the substance of God; all thought is God thinking; all consciousness is God conscious; I am God, body and soul, and nothing but God; the same is true of all other men and things; we are all God, and God is all of us; we are not many, but one; as the waves are not different from the ocean, but only perishing and fleeting forms thereof, so we—all things, objective and subjective—are but modes of the Infinite. It will be found that, in the last analysis, this scheme, though the most extreme opposite of Atheism, that wholly ignoring God, this wholly ignoring any being other than God, is essentially the same. Its god is impersonal nature. It denies creation, since there is nothing existing, and never can be, but God; it denies all moral distinctions, since there is but one indisceptible actor; it converts the me and the not me into a delusion, since there is no not me in being, and no me as distinct from the whole. Allow it to be true, and consciousness is a cheat, moral distinctions fictions, all ideas and experiences and hopes and fears vagaries and dreams, resting upon no reality; God is the sum of all inconsistencies and contradictions—a kaleidoscope, whose shifting combinations mean nothing—an ever-becoming unintelligible masquerade of fleeting forms and vanishing thoughts.

Its effects must be essentially the same as those of the systems already noticed. It has no hope. Its gairish rarefied atmosphere supports only shadows. For the guilt and sorrows and aspirations of the human soul it has nothing, except the dreary thought that

these are mere delusions, the shadows of a shade, since there are no human souls. The system prostitutes God and abnegates man, and sweeps away the possibility of both virtue and happiness from the universe, since it abolishes the conditions of both. It may amuse the intellect as a speculation, but it can never find place in the heart as a creed until the heart itself has become the sepulchre of blasted loves and perished hopes.

Apply the principle to the various systems of idolatry and heathenism.

The most absurd and meaningless of all the idolatries is better than no religion. Utterly false and bad as it is, it comes nearer the truth than the universal negation. Some of the systems of mythology have possessed much truth, but as scattered rays amid immensity of darkness. Their worship has been the absurd worship of things that are not God.

The fruits of one system are the fruits of all. What it is at one time and in one place, it is for all time and the earth over. Its revolting portrait is fully drawn in Romans, second chapter. Such was heathenism two thousand years ago, within the limits of the proudest and greatest empire the world ever beheld; such it is to-day, wherever it is found. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The world wants not heathenism! Its fruits are all bitter, even in the mouth; in the belly, they are wormwood—hemlock. From its proud temple resounding with the worship of the Olympian god, to its miserable fetich and loathsome greegree, it is full of abomination. It has nothing for mankind but death. Look and see! Is it not so? Look at India, with its blood-impurpled Ganges, and the senseless tortures of Brahminical worship; look at China, with its million pagodas, and its cheerless and stupid ancestralism; look at central and further Asia, with its mosques and pseudo-revelations; look at Africa, with its besotted fetichism, and obscene and devilish orgies; look everywhere over the wide regions of heathenism, and one sight greets the vision at every turning—one wide, dreary, dreadful desolation; a scene of barbarian stupidity, and foul and disgusting depravity, at which the heart sickens, and every sensibility revolts. Death, death, death, everywhere. Cheerless, hopeless, rayless night. Such is heathenism. The world wants it not. Its fruits condemn it.

Let the Bible be now tried by this test: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The Bible comes to the world as a divine system—a revelation from the great paternal Spirit of the Universe. It prescribes duty, and assumes the direction and guidance both of the faith and practice of mankind. It demands that all men should abandon every other authority, and implicitly embrace and obey it. To reject or neglect it is the highest guilt, while to receive and honor it is the sure passport to the favor of God and supreme felicities of heaven.

What are the fruits of this scheme? How does it answer its high professions? Look over the world, and behold!

Let any one take a map of the world, and, carefully drawing a line around those portions where the Bible and Christianity prevail, institute a comparison between such portions and those under the sway of other systems, and what will he discover? A contrast the most striking, in every point of view, as of midnight and mid-day. And why this? It is not to be explained upon any natural difference of soil, or climate, or mineral resources, or population. Britain is the same island, and its people the same people, they were two thousand years ago. The valleys of the Indus or Niger are not inferior to-day to those of the Thames or Mississippi. The territories embraced by the North American States are precisely what they were only three hundred years ago, when pagan tribes held undisputed sway. The contrast is to be found in the tendencies of systems.

Again, let a contrast be instituted between Christian nations, and what do we find? That just in proportion as they are Christian, they rise in the scale of excellence; just in the ratio in which the Bible is made known, and its precepts practiced, the nation rises up in all the elements of worth and prosperity. Why is Scotland superior to Ireland? The former is a vast stone-henge, the latter the most fertile island on the globe—the emerald gem of the sea! Nature has done all for the latter, nothing for the former! Yet, while Ireland is cursed with almost pagan night, every rocky crag of Scotland blazes with meridian day! Why? Scotland has an open Bible, read in her families and taught her children, and Scotland has faith and a Sabbath; Ireland has the confessional and priestly absolutions! Take Italy and Switzerland; take England and Spain; take the United States of North America and the States of South America; the same contrasts, and for the same causes, are seen in every case. Throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, one can tell, by the very aspect of the country—the thrift, and industry, and intel-

ligence, and morality, and happiness, and social elevation, of the people—where there is a Bible received and revered, and where there is not! Its fruits are as obvious as the mountain ranges and great rivers. What does it mean? "By their fruits ye shall know them." The Bible makes the difference! Where it goes, and is read and believed, the rock turns into gold, and the wilderness blossoms and blooms like a garden. Flowers spring up in its path, and the continents and islands become radiant beneath its beams! It takes Druid Britain, and transforms it into Christian England—pagan America, and makes Christian Massachusetts, and her constellation of sister Christian States! Any land, and elevates it into honor and glory, and makes it great and distinguished in the earth, though it be a barren heath, or a cold and rocky desert.

Let it be viewed in its influence upon individuals, and let the contrast be between those in the same place and condition who accept and those who reject it; and here the contrast will be no less striking than in the former case. It will be found that, in proportion as the individual man or family or state comes under the influence of the Bible, he and they are elevated and ennobled; it carries into the individual heart and family and neighborhood the seeds of a new life—a power which makes all things new! Every man knows this. Commencing with the best forms of humanity, the purest and noblest portions of the race, you find that they are those who are most imbued with the Bible! Going downward, you observe, just as you sink in the scale of excellence, that you are finding less and less of the Bible, until, in the abysses of depravity and shame, you are among those who discard it entirely! Or, beginning at the lowest extreme, it is seen that, just as you ascend, you come into the atmosphere of that holy and divine book!

You find, again, that when the elevated and good gradually let go the Bible, and just in the ratio in which they do so, they infallibly sink down, and lose their pre-eminence; and again, when the Bible is introduced amid the lowest and basest conditions, just in the degree in which they embrace it, it lifts them up, until, from the deepest abysses of degradation, they pass up to the very summits of pre-eminence. These are facts well known—witnessed by all. And why is it? There can be no difficulty in answering the question. The case is plain. The Bible contains truths which elevate and improve mankind. These results flow from it, as the stream from the foun-

tain. What it does for one, it would do for all. What it does for one nation, it would do, it will yet do, for all nations. Let its principles but prevail universally, let it be received fully into all hearts, let its life-giving currents flow through all families, let it gain a place in all countries, and such will be its fruit universally; it will make a new world, as it makes new men and new nations. Does any man doubt it? Has not the fact become established in every conviction?

Let the test be applied: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Bring forth the blessed book; behold what it hath wrought! Let its divine fruits cluster upon it — its hallowed influences, its resplendent trophies, all that it hath done for the world! And what is the judgment? Do not all men rise up to hail it? Is there one in all the world so blind, so lost, so devilish, that will not in his heart exclaim, Hail, thou blessed of the Lord—thou harbinger of good to man!

Without remaining longer on this part of the subject, we shall proceed, in conclusion, to some reflections which grow out of the preceding line of discussion.

1. A system so replete with blessings to mankind deserves to be cherished by all men. Nay, more: it becomes a most sacred duty to humanity to love and promote it; and he must be accounted inimical to his species who hinders or impedes it.

Aside from considerations of duty to God as the author of revelation, and aside from the personal interest we all have involved, there arises an obligation to humanity, to the world, of a most urgent and commanding character, which, without most inhuman and cruel recreancy, we cannot refuse. The highest interests of our children, and kinsmen, and race, for all generations, is concerned. The Bible is their only hope. Every other scheme fails them. Deprive them of this, and the race is doomed. There can be no mistake about this. The experiment of ages proves it. All history is full of the demonstration. Strike it down, and man's last refuge is swept away. An awful midnight of guilt, and despair, and ruin, must ensue. Strike it down, and the sky is swept of every star, and the earth of every blossom! There remains nothing, nothing but death—no hiding but the grave! Palsied be the hand that would inflict so dire a calamity—palsied the arm that interposes not to prevent it. The hand lifted against the Bible is lifted against humanity—against me,

against you, against our children! The wrong it would inflict is a million-fold worse than murder! It is the moral and social murder of mankind. We hold it as a sacred trust for the ages. Anything else we have to transmit to them is husks and vanity! The Bible is their life! Faithless? A thousand hells were a penalty too small for treason such as this! No! no!! no!!! We cannot be indifferent spectators when such an issue is made.

It follows from the discussion, that the abettors of infidel theories and perverted forms of Christianity must be condemned, as inflicting the grossest wrong upon society. Their attitude is not one of indifference or innocence. It matters nothing what may be their social position; it matters nothing what may be their professed aim. They may regard themselves as only exercising their natural rights in propagating their dreadful dogmas, and they may consider that no imminent evil is implied. The fact is, they have commenced a most deadly war against the best interests of mankind; and every man owes to himself, and to his assailed brotherhood, and to God, to assume explicit ground, and stand forth in the breach as the friend and defender of his own and his species' interests!

We must take the Bible closer than ever to our hearts; we must no longer view it as simply an interesting antiquity—a monument of the genius and learning of former times—a powerful and wonderful book, which has done good service in its time, but in whose fate we have no vital concern; we must no longer regard it as merely the property of Christians, from which they are to derive strange but unimportant doctrines, and by which their organisms are to be preserved. If history teaches us anything, it teaches us that all happiness and progress for the race centres here; that therefore it is a common cause, and the most urgent and momentous in the universe!

2. It results, from the tenor of discourse, that the most earnest efforts should continue to be made to give the Bible to the nations that have it not.

3. It is obvious that, as there is hope nowhere else for the race, there is hope in the Bible; it is the pledge and promise of a better future. What it has done, it can do, it will do. It will yet make all heathendom to bloom. Infidelity cannot triumph against it. The Bible belongs to God, and He will take care of it.

4. It follows that the friends of the Bible are the truest and best friends of humanity, and are engaged in the noblest cause in the

universe! While they dig for the ore which makes themselves rich, they are enriching their children and all posterity.

Finally: Would we become good, and would we have our families become good; would we be lifted up to the very summits of excellence and prosperity, our way is through the Bible. It furnishes us the infallible helps. It is not enough that it is in the world—that we have it in our houses—that we hug it to our hearts, as a most precious treasure—that we account him an enemy to ourselves who is an enemy to it—that we print it by millions, and give it to the nations! It is not enough that it is preached from our pulpits, incorporated in our literature, and enthroned in our government. We must read and believe and practice it. We must eat it as our daily bread, and derive our life from it. It must enter into our souls, and become, in some sort, a part of ourselves; its ideas, and principles, and hopes, and aims, must become our own; it must rule our rulers and permeate our commerce; it must enter our families, and markets, and schools, and courts; it must reproduce itself in us; we must become living Bibles; our minds must think by it, and our hearts beat by it, and our acts square by it; we must be true to it, and teach our children to be true to it; we must make it our guide for time, and our light for eternity; we must build on it, and hide in it; it must be our first, and last, and only law!

Let us do this, brothers, and it will be our palladium, our high tower, our salvation! It will keep us from evil amid the temptations of time; it will furnish us for eternity; and amid the swellings of Jordan, and in the bitterness of the last conflict, it will sustain and comfort us, and bear us in triumph and glory to the heaven of its promise:

Which may God grant, for His name sake Amen.

J. L. Burrows

THE MERELY MORAL MAN.

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He that is not with Me, is against Me.—*Matthew*, xii, 30.

There are, in most communities, some persons who claim to be friends to Christianity, while they acknowledge that they are not practically pious. They would not be classed among opposers or unbelievers of the Gospel. They praise the religion of Jesus as an admirable and excellent system of truth, fitted to restrain the wickedness of men, and to promote social refinement, purity, and benevolence. They attend the house of God themselves, lead their families thither, and recommend its services to their neighbors. They seem kindly disposed to patronize Jesus Christ and His church.

They are strictly honest, too, in all their dealings with men. A dime dishonestly taken would burn their fingers.

Sometimes they are even charitable; ready with their contributions to relieve the suffering, to benefit mankind, and to aid the enterprises of the church. Scanned by human scrutiny, their character and conduct may seem faultless.

But they are not, practically, at heart, Christians. Their souls have never been inspired by the love of Christ. If to be "with Jesus" imply union by faith to Him, spiritual affinity with Him, supreme love for Him, sincere desire to obey Him, and to be in life and in heart conformed to His example and spirit, then they are not "with Him."

Frequently the class of men of whom I speak frankly acknowledge that they are not Christians, and express the hope that they yet may be.

The text conveys a fearful truth in relation to such persons. "He that is not with ME, is against ME."

Let us prayerfully and candidly examine this truth.

None doubt that the openly wicked and profane are opposed to Christ. Their whole spirit and influence are antagonistic to the principles by which He seeks to govern the world.

The difficulty seems to be, where to place that class of persons, who, so far as this world is concerned, are truly excellent and amiable, but who are not, and do not profess to be, practically and heartily the disciples of Jesus.

We will consider, then, as the subject of this discourse:

THE CHARACTER, INFLUENCE, AND DESTINY, OF THE MERELY MORAL MAN.

I use this phrase, "the merely moral man," because, in ordinary language, it conveys just the shade of meaning I wish to convey.

We often hear one described as a strictly moral though not a pious man. Alas! there are many, in the church as well as out of it, whose character is thus described.

I. We propose, in the first place, to portray THE CHARACTER OF THE MERELY MORAL MAN.

It is not denied nor doubted that he does many good things; develops many worthy and exemplary traits of character. He may be honest in his dealings, prompt in fulfilling his promises, generous in his friendships, amiable in his deportment, charitable with his property, affectionate and lovable in his social relations. We grant him all he claims for himself. Let him write a catalogue of his own virtues, and comment upon the excellences of each, in terms as laudatory as his conscience will permit, and we will subscribe a certificate of its correctness. Yet, with all this, he may be "against Christ."

Whatever may be his good qualities or actions, they are not the result of a principle of obedience to God. He who submits his soul to the authority of God, as his Lawgiver and Sovereign, will not wilfully transgress any commandment. He recognises the sanction of Jehovah, as impressed alike upon all his laws, and therefore dare not choose from among them those which will be most agreeable to himself, and reject those which may be irksome or unpleasant. The child who only obeys those requirements of the parent which accord with his own feelings and tastes, and refuses compliance with such as thwart his own desires, is in no sense an obedient child. His own inclinations, and not the parent's will, is the rule of his actions. A man may be advised, by a hated enemy, to pursue a line of conduct

that answers to his own wishes, and he may adopt the counsel while he curses the counsellor. If he obey only those laws that please himself, he obeys only himself. Ninety and nine of the laws of the land, one may faithfully observe, because they suit his interests, or because he has no strong motive to violate them; yet a wilful and perverse breach of the hundredth, stamps him a criminal.

So is it, in relation to the law of God. He whose actions are prompted by a supreme regard to Jehovah's authority will willingly disobey in no point, because that authority, and not his own will, is law to him. He who wilfully and perseveringly violates but one law, cannot be governed by the principle of obedience in conforming to any. Hence, God has said: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all," (or wholly guilty.) That is, he who is not obedient from principle, is not obedient at all.

Are you honest, *because* God commands honesty? Then you will pray daily and fervently, because that too is God's commandment. If the reason for the duty is in the authority of the Lawgiver, and not in your own choice or desire, then you cannot indulge in preferences or make exceptions among His laws.

The regenerate child of God may indeed be betrayed or tempted into sin, but he cannot love it nor continue in it. The supreme desire of his heart is, to be entirely controlled by the will of the Lord.

The merely moral man, then, is not controlled simply by a regard to God's authority, because he habitually lives in known disobedience to all His spiritual requirements. The Lord commands him to pray, and he does not pray—to repent of sin, and he does not repent—to confide his soul in faith to the keeping of Jesus Christ, and the control of the Holy Spirit, and he does it not. The Lord commands him to love his enemies, and he does not love nor strive to love them. He does not even aim to fulfil those personal spiritual duties that involve the daily communion of the soul with God.

And yet these are all commandments of Jehovah, as important, and based upon the same authority, as those which are designed to govern his more obvious relations to his fellow men.

Whatever right actions, then, he may perform, whatever good emotions or dispositions he may exhibit, they are not rendered *because* God requires them. There is some other reason than the authority of the Lord for their cultivation.

Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that from such a man as we are describing, charity is solicited by a hungry child; he promptly gives alms for its relief. This is a good deed, and he would have been blamable to have refused. Now, what are the real motives that prompt this beneficence. Perhaps his heart is oppressed by the thought of the want and wretchedness of that sufferer, and to relieve himself, he gives. Perhaps he desires to impress upon the mind of that beggar child—or through it, upon some other minds—a sense of his own generosity. Some desire there may be, too, to relieve the suffering. He feels that there is a kind of obligation resting on the prosperous, to aid the needy.

Now, do we not give to that action all the credit it deserves? But is there any reference to God in it? Does the thought that it is done in obedience to a commandment of the Lord once occur to his mind? If not, then the motives that prompt and the emotions that accompany such charity terminate mainly upon self.

You have perhaps given liberal contributions to some benevolent purposes. This was, in itself, praiseworthy. But what was the nature of your reflections previous or subsequent to such gifts? Was there any thought of Christ's requirements in connection with them? Was there not a fear that you might be considered mean or avaricious if you refused, or a desire to be regarded as generous or liberal by your compliance with the request? Might not one have manifested a similar liberality, from precisely similar motives, who doubted or denied the existence of a God?

You do not mingle, with the openly vicious, in scenes of debauchery, riot, and crime. Why do you abstain? Is it from a regard to God's law? Or is it from a dread of disgrace, or a desire to maintain a good reputation? Or is it because a higher social refinement has created a distaste for such scenes and associations? Does any thought of God's disapproval interpose to check you?

Do you not more frequently ask what is reputable than what is right? Do you not strive rather to conceal than to conquer your faults?

Thus, when we scrutinize rigidly the deeds and developments of a mere worldly morality—of which so much boast is made—we find that they do not originate in any desire to please God, or to render obedience to His law, *because it is His law.*

If we could strip away all the motives to morality by which unre-

newed men are governed—the desire of praise, the fear of reproach, the dread of singularity, the effort to gain or preserve a reputation, the influence of custom and fashion, the workings of natural sympathy—there would be no inducement left to many, to manifest any benevolent emotion, or perform any charitable deed. They would live and act about as they do, were it possible, if they were convinced that no God existed, or claimed obedience from them.

Thus we percieve that many actions and emotions, right in themselves, may be exhibited without any regard whatever to God's authority or even existence.

The character of the merely moral man may, then, be thus delineated. He performs many useful and praiseworthy actions, but none from a principle of obedience to God. He is rigidly honest in his dealings with his fellow men, but is dishonest toward God. He would not defraud man of a farthing, but he robs God of those affections to which He has the highest and tenderest claim. He dreads the censure and courts the approbation of the world, more solicitously than he fears the displeasure or seeks the favor of God. All his thoughts and affections terminate upon earthly objects, just as if piety had no claims, and God demanded no obedience. The graphic metaphor of Jesus is fairly descriptive of this class of persons. In the eyes of men, they are as "whited sepulchres," which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but to the eye of God, which scrutinizes the heart, they are "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

We proceed to notice—

II. THE NATURE OF THE INFLUENCE EXERTED BY THE MERELY MORAL MAN.

His reputation and respectability in society give him an influence that cannot be secured by the openly vicious. His deportment and habits command respect, and by children, kindred, and friends, he is regarded, it may be, as a pattern for imitation. In proportion to his honesty, sobriety, good judgment, and experience, is his influence extended.

Look, then, upon this sage, pure moralist, surrounded by a circle of trusting and affectionate hearts, upon all which, as their lucid centre, he radiates the light of his example and teaching, and say, will that light guide them to Calvary and to Zion? Is it not rather like that of a flickering taper, gloomily illumining the vestibule to "utter darkness?" Though that influence may temporarily restrain

and regulate the worldly conduct—though it may tend to train worthy and amiable members of society for the present life—yet is it at all adapted to teach the depravity and guilt of our fallen nature; the essential necessity of regeneration and of a Mediator and Saviour; or any of those momentous truths upon which the salvation of the soul depends?

One lesson conveyed by the entire influence of the merely moral man is, that the restraints of piety are unnecessary. When the question is anxiously asked, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" the Bible replies, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." There is no need for that, is the response, not perhaps of the lips, but emphatically of the life, of the irreligious moralist. His influence and example say, "I take no heed to the Word of God; I am not restrained by its precepts, nor controlled by its spirit; yet my way is clean in the esteem of the world. You may, my child, my neighbor, be like me, respected and beloved, amiable and benevolent, without heeding the restraints of piety." Is not a life like this "against Christ?"

The carnal heart, hostile to holiness, greedily imbibes such teachings, and children and kindred are lured, by the deceitful sophisms of such a life, along the broad road to perdition.

Ye worldly-minded fathers! will ye thus draw, as in the net of an irreligious influence, your own sons away from the narrow path to life everlasting, and encourage them in fatal "neglect of the great salvation?"

Another lesson instilled by the influence of the worldly moralist is, that there may be true enjoyment, a satisfied heart, without obedience to God.

The Word of God declares, "There is no peace to the wicked;" "Wretchedness and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known."

The thoughtless daughter may cry, when such assertions are made, "Does my dear mother experience no peace nor happiness? She is not religious, yet surely she enjoys much. There must, therefore, be peace and felicity without piety."

Alas! short-sighted maiden; you know not that mother's painful anxieties—perhaps remorse—in her hours of solitude and reflection; nor do you know the infinite superiority of those "joys unspeakable," which true piety procures, and in comparison of which, the peace which "the world giveth" is "no peace."

Can you not see that that daughter is led, by the cords of a godless yet moral mother's influence, away from the "straight gate" that opens towards heaven, and into the "broad road" that terminates in the "burning lake?"

Ye worldly mothers! will ye continue to exert that strong, sweet influence, which filial love so confidingly owns, in teaching your children that piety is needless for them, and that they may be happy enough and safe enough without regard to the comforts and sanctions of religion?

The influence of the mere worldly moralist, draws the soul away from dependence upon the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ. In the Cross, centre all the sinner's rational hopes for heaven. There may be a dreamy and misty expectation of gaining eternal life, "by deeds of righteousness which we have done," but it is "baseless as the fabric of a vision."

It dispenses with the atonement of Christ Jesus, and "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved." No "other foundation" for acceptance with God can any man lay, "than is laid." There is no possibility of salvation to a sinner, but through Christ.

The merely moral man gives all his influence to bring this medium of salvation into doubt and disrepute, by encouraging men to depend upon their own righteousness. They shun and spurn "the foundation stone which God has laid in Zion," and point to the quivering quicksands of external merit, as a substitute. They tear away the Cross, and plant in its place the ragged banner of self-righteousness. Thus they array their influence—often perhaps in dumb unconsciousness—in hostility to the purposes and teachings of Jesus, and, as far as others are controlled by that influence, are they led along the way that ends in everlasting destruction.

In one very important respect, the influence of worldly moralism is more baneful than that of open and odious vice. We are not speaking of the inherent character of these different classes of men, but of the influence exerted by their examples and lives upon others, and we repeat that, in one view of the subject, the lessons of the mere moralist's life are more hurtful than those of the utterly vile and profane.

> "Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,
> As, to be hated, needs but to be seen."

The drunkard, the robber, the assassin, the riotous and profligate, all stand out as so many truthful witnesses of the deceitfulness and deformity of sin, and frown the tempted youth from the entrance into its paths. Who would transgress God's laws, if the dreadful results to which sin leads were continually forced upon his gaze? Who would slight God's mercy, with the howls of the damned always ringing in his ears? When we see one debased, brutalized, and wretched, from sinful indulgences, we are repelled from the remote beginnings of a career that forebodes such a termination. Thus, depravity, embodied in its ugliest shapes, furnishes most terrific warnings against persistence in sin. The thoughtful youth will not follow such leading, if his eyes are once fairly open upon the goal.

But when the hand of the respected and moral father is affectionately laid in the hand of his son, how easily may he be led away from God, and toward destruction! When the hideous deformities of an impenitent and rebellious heart are concealed, by the robe of external virtue, the thoughtless and the giddy may be easily drawn astray.

According to the Mosaic law, the man who was but partially leprous—whose appearance did not plainly reveal the loathsome disease—was required, under heavier penalties than the palpably-ulcered victim, to separate himself from all intercourse with the healthful. The reason for this is obvious. Men needed no special warning to prompt them to avoid the marked leper. But the concealed contagion might be borne unobserved among the dwellings of the well. So, those who do not develop in its loathsomeness the leprosy of sin—who hide, beneath a healthful exterior, the direful plague—may carry and spread it, where the openly, noisomely diseased dare not come.

Again: No man has a moral right to pursue any course of conduct—to exert any kind of influence—which, if exerted by all, would result in universal wretchedness. What would be wrong for all men, can be right for none. Suppose that, from this day, all men were to resolve to be governed only by the principles of a mere worldly morality, how terrible and ruinous would be the results! Our Bibles and churches might at once be given to the flames. The voice of prayer and thanksgiving would be forever hushed. All the tender sympathies and loving charities, that are peculiar to Gospel piety, would be exiled from the world. The reins of government would be torn from the hands of Jehovah, for man would submit to no control

but that of his own selfish principles and will. Horrible beyond imagining would be the result of the universal adoption of the moralist's rule of life!

Thus we see that the influence of the whole spirit and life of the merely moral man is arrayed against God and the Gospel. He is not with Christ; he is against Him.

III. LET US CONSIDER, THIRDLY, WHAT MUST BE THE DESTINY OF THE MERELY MORAL MAN.

He cannot be admitted to association with the ransomed in heaven, for several reasons:

He has no plea of justification to enter at the bar of God for the sins he has committed. That he has transgressed the law of God, in some points, he dare not deny; and although he may think that his guilt is but trifling, yet the least taint or spot is sufficient to exclude him from heaven, for "there entereth nothing that defileth." "He that offendeth in one point"—and this is true of all law, human and divine—is guilty, wholly guilty. How, then, shall he be justified or purified for heaven? He has slighted that which alone can "cleanse from sin"—"the blood of Christ." "He trusted in himself that he was righteous." And no despiser of Christ can ever enter heaven. There, worship of Him is the peculiar employment and enjoyment. The ransomed hosts love to swell and prolong the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain;" "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." In such doxology, he could take no part. And can the redeemed of the blood of Jesus regard with complacency those who have slighted their Redeemer—who have lived and died unaffected by His love—who have preferred dependence upon themselves to faith in Him? How could he associate in loving communion with them?

Heaven would furnish no joy for such. They could find there no pleasures suited to their taste. They have never loved the service and worship of the Saviour upon earth, and that service and worship form the occupation and delight of the redeemed. There is nothing in death to change the tastes and habitudes of the soul. The pursuits and emotions that are hateful to him on earth, without regeneration, would be equally so in heaven. The society and conversation distasteful to him here, without a renewal of his nature, would be even more distasteful there, for it will be more holy. There would be no music in all the harps of heaven for his ear.

You perceive, then, that the worldly moralist is not excluded from heaven for flagrant, debasing crimes—for sins which he never committed. Some speak as though it would be cruel and vindictive in God to condemn and banish from His presence those whose lives have been so moral and praiseworthy. But it is not for their virtues—not because they have been moral and upright—that God bars heaven against their entrance. He is just, and He rewards them, as He rewards all, "according to the deeds done in the body." They are banished from God and heaven, because they have no affinities for them—because there is no adaptation in the joys of heaven to the gratification of their unchanged natures—because they have neglected and hated Jesus Christ, arrayed all their influence against His benevolent designs for the regeneration of the world—and because they have passed, without profiting, the only period during which means and facilities are furnished for renewing the spirit, and fitting it for the blessedness of heaven. He is excluded by the necessities of his own nature.

As the mere worldly moralist cannot associate, either in fact or in heart, with those who are "washed and sanctified" by the blood of Jesus, the only alternative is, that he must find companions among devils and the lost. Oh! thought appalling, and burdened with horror! The moral and upright man of the world—the volatile and fastidious daughter of fashion—those who have shunned companionship with the degraded and debased upon earth—who have withheld even the ordinary tokens of recognition from a former friend, disgraced by unfashionable vice—those who have been welcome guests in "good society," as it is termed in fashion's technicalities; for such to be driven to mingle eternally with robbers and assassins, with liars and blasphemers, with drunkards and harlots, with the most debased and vicious of earth—this will be indeed an overwhelmingly terrific doom. There, ears accustomed here to the sweetest music, to the softest intonations of friendly voices, must listen to the grating curses of blasphemy and the wailings of despair. There, eyes that have scarcely looked upon aught save flowers and cheerful faces, must gaze upon contortions of agony and writhings of woe. They must themselves, too, become objects of loathing, and subjects of hopeless despair. Guilty man, living without Christ in the world! this is as certainly true as the Word of God is true.

Almighty God! avert this fearful doom from him who reads this

page. Convince and renew his soul by Thy grace, that, repenting of sin and believing in Jesus, he may be saved through His atoning blood.

REFLECTIONS.

1. *It is right, though it is not sufficient, to practice the most rigid rules of morality.*

It was not for tything "mint and anise and cummin" that the Pharisees were condemned, but for omitting "judgment and mercy and faith, the weightier matters of the law." "These things ought ye to have done," said Jesus, "and not to leave the others undone." It is not for conforming to the rules of a strict morality that God denounces punishments against men, but for the neglect of the principles and spirit of piety. The mere moralist may enumerate and boast of his good deeds and benevolent sympathies; he may tell of his alms to the needy and his charity to the church; of his desire for the prosperity of Zion; of the piety of his kindred; of his joys for the gladness and his tears for the sorrows of others; and we will believe him and honor and love him for all.

But while his spirit refuses submission to Christ Jesus, while he withholds his heart's affections and fellowship from His sufferings, while he proudly lives regardless of His sacrifice and mediation, Jesus ranks him among His enemies. "He that is not with Me, is against Me."

2. *The Lord will not accept any compounding of one class of duties for another.* Men are much disposed to plead their good deeds as an offset to their irreligion. But a scrupulous performance of one series of duties can never excuse negligence of others of equal or superior moment. God will make no such compromise. He will not—He cannot, consistently with His attributes and the interests of His moral administration—approve or accept a partial obedience. You must be saved, either by keeping the whole law, or through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But you have not kept—you have not even tried to keep—the whole law. You have perhaps never even attempted to obey those commandments which require the affections of the heart for God and holiness. You have sinned, and yet have never repented, prayed for pardon, believed in Jesus, nor exercised any spiritual emotions, nor performed any spiritual duties, which are peculiar to the Christian spirit and life. You cannot be saved by your good works, for these, at best, have been sadly deficient; nor by faith in Christ, for that you have not exercised.

"Talk they of morals! Oh, Thou bleeding Lamb!
The great morality is love of Thee!"

FINALLY: *Ponder the folly and guilt of trusting to a mere Godless morality for salvation.* Ye who are depending upon your moral deeds and amiable dispositions, and hoping that they will take you to heaven, hear and heed the voice of warning and exhortation.

Briefly review the sentiments that have been advanced, and, in view of their truth and weight, build upon a sure foundation.

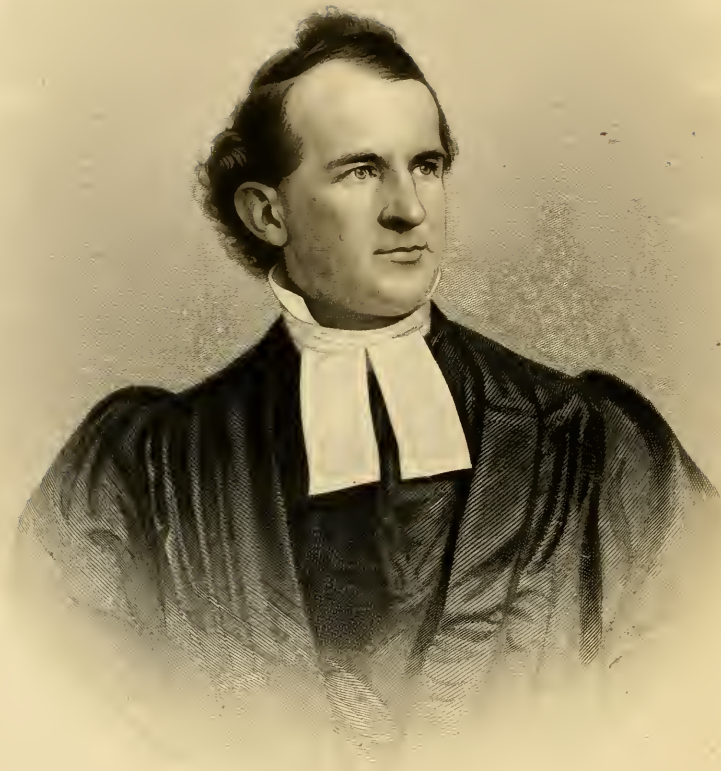
You have contemplated the *character* of the man who is called by the world moral, and have seen that he is not controlled by any regard to God's law in what he does—that he makes himself his own lawgiver—and that all his deeds of charity and kindness may be consistent with entire selfishness.

You have also examined the *influence* which his teaching and example exert upon the world, and seen that it induces men to break away from the restraints of godliness, to undervalue the blessedness of piety, to slight the warnings and invitations of the Gospel—that it tends to the overthrow of God's government, to the introduction of universal skepticism and misrule, and encourages scorn and neglect of the great salvation provided by the sacrifice and intercession of Christ.

You have been forewarned of the just and terrible *doom* that must befall those who have nothing better than their own imperfect righteousness to commend them to God's grace.

A wretched maniac, who had escaped from his cell, once fancied that he would be beyond the reach of the pursuing keepers, if he could only gain the summit of the glass dome upon the roof of the hospital. He ran up to the top of the building, rushed along its roof, and sprang upon the brittle structure. It crushed under him, and he fell upon the paved hall beneath, a mangled corpse.

So may you, who are so unwisely, guiltily, depending upon your own defective virtues—so may you, in your moral madness, trust the weight of your soul upon the smooth and glittering platform of self-merit, but it will not sustain the burden. It is built over the gulf of perdition, and the crash will precipitate you into the burning waves. Already it may be breaking. Oh! leap from it, into the outstretched arms of Jesus. Upon Him, as upon the rock of ages, you may depend. There, and nowhere else, you will be forever safe.



Geo. D. Cummins

THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

BY REV. GEORGE D. CUMMINS, D. D.,
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And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.—*St. John*, xii, 32.

When Jesus spake these words, *His gaze was fixed upon the Cross.* The "lifting up from the earth," to which He referred," was the hour, when, nailed to the accursed tree, He should be "lifted up" on Calvary, in the sight of a mocking and insulting crowd, to endure the bitter and ignominious death of the crucified. Such an interpretation of His words is not a suggestion of the fallible human mind; it is the explanation of the sacred writer himself. "*This He said,*" adds St. John, "*signifying what death He should die.*" And yet, it was a joyful exclamation—a prediction uttered with a heart swelling with love, and full of anticipations of coming triumph. And so, we may believe that, throughout the whole life of Jesus, His eye was fixed upon the closing scene upon Calvary, longing for the great consummation of His redeeming work. Never, it may be, was that vision of suffering and shame hidden from His mind. Hence it was that so often He forewarned His disciples of those fast-approaching scenes. Hence His earnest expression, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Hence, even in the midst of the transcendent glory of the Transfiguration, and in communion with the glorified spirits of Moses and Elijah, His converse was only of "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." And now, as the hour draws nigh, and the shadow of the Cross falls darkly upon Him, it is almost with the language of exultation that He exclaims, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

What a testimony to the divine omniscience of Christ is to be gathered from such a prediction! What more unlikely than that the drawing of all hearts to the persecuted Nazarene should follow His being lifted up upon the Cross! What, to human judgment, seemed better fitted to secure the rejection of Christianity, than the death of its Founder by the Roman penalty of crucifixion—a death of ignominy, to which only the basest malefactors were consigned?

Yet, in the face of all this likelihood, Jesus predicts the very opposite results, and makes His Cross of agony and shame the mighty magnet which should attract the world to Him as its Redeemer—"the polar power of the spiritual world, to which every heart should tremble and turn."

The attractive power of the Cross, and the powerlessness of all else, to draw the heart to God—this is now our theme.

Perhaps the most difficult problem which infinite wisdom had to solve in the redemption of our world was this: How can the love of a revolted and alienated race of beings be won back to God? It was a problem quite distinct from others, which must be solved ere man could be redeemed. It was one thing to reconcile God to man; it was another to reconcile man to God. It was one thing to remove the mighty barriers which stood in the way of guilty man's return to his offended and outraged Sovereign; it was quite another to move him to rush with outgushings of love back to the outstretched arms of his Creator. It was one thing that the face of the Infinite One should be turned with a smile of forgiving love upon His erring child; it was another to make that prodigal child look up, and, with a full and bursting heart, say, Abba! Father!

And so take the human heart now, dead and cold to God; without one throb of love to God—nay, with an aversion to Him, and no desire for His love or favor; and how shall that alienated heart be won to tenderness, to gratitude, to fervent love? There is but one way; there is but one power mighty enough to effect it. Infinite wisdom tried but one way; it was the way Jesus declared when He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me!" One chord alone in man's cold heart could be touched with the hope of awakening a response, and that chord must be swept by the finger of love—love reaching its sublimest manifestation upon the Cross of Calvary.

Let us, however, not anticipate our subject, but first seek to ele-

vate it, by testing the worth and power of other means to effect this great design.

I. And, first, see how powerless our highest natural conceptions of God are to awaken love to Him. The instinctive and universal feeling towards God, where he is unknown as "God in Christ," as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," is a feeling of *dread*. Where, in any heathen nation, is there to be found the conception of God as a being to be loved? Where does love mingle with their worship? Is it not all fear, dread, terror? What is the meaning of the almost-universal prevalence of human sacrifices? What mean the offerings to Moloch, the drownings in the sacred Ganges, the immolations under Juggernaut's car? What do all the cruel and bloody rites of heathenism mean but this—that the Deity is *to be feared*, to be *dreaded*, to be *propitiated*, and that there is nothing in His character to awaken love?

And this feeling has its basis in man's moral nature, in the sense of guilt and ill-desert, in the law written by the finger of the great Creator upon every human soul. Tell me alone of the omnipotence of God in its sublimest aspects, and the intelligence is only fitted to fill me with alarm, as the array of the forces of Him whose power I have cause to fear. Tell me of His unsullied justice alone, and I am prompted to flee from the face of Him whose laws I have broken, and whose just anger I have incurred. Tell me of the dazzling holiness of the Being "in whose sight the heavens are not clean," and rather than be drawn to His presence, would my strongest impulse be to call upon the rocks and mountains to hide me, the unholy and unclean, from His gaze.

II. Nor is *nature*, or *the visible universe*, better able to accomplish this great work of drawing the heart of man to God, where the universe is beheld without the light of Revelation.

Such an announcement may sound strange to many who all their lives have been accustomed to "look through nature up to nature's God." There are certain minds, gifted with a love of the beautiful, and elevated by a high degree of culture, who, as they behold the radiant glories of the morning, or the milder beauty of the setting sun, the splendor of night when the firmament is all glowing with living lights, the beauty of spring-time, the golden harvest-fields of summer and the gorgeous hues of autumn, the grandeur of mountain and cataract and ocean, can only see incentives to love towards Him

who traces the lines on every leaf, and colors every flower with beauty. They forget how much of the beauteous light from the face of nature *is reflected light from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* How different its aspect to those who are without a knowledge of salvation through the Redeemer! Has nature ever taught the heathen world to love God? Nay, where the light of the Gospel has never penetrated, all the beauty and grandeur and sublimity of this goodly universe have been powerless to enkindle in the darkened and degraded soul one throb of genuine love to the Creator.

Men forget also that nature has two voices, and that her testimony is far from being harmonious and invariable. If tokens of goodness abound on every side, they are commingled with signs of severity. The surface of the earth, so fair and smiling with the fruits of plenty, might speak of the hand of a loving and bounteous Father; but within and beneath the soil are to be found traces of convulsion, disaster, and ruin, which might indicate the judgments of an angry Deity. The gentle refreshing rain of summer might bear one testimony to God, and the fearful tempest or desolating tornado another. The air of heaven, now bringing health to the invalid's wasted frame, bears witness to the goodness of God; while the same element, ladened with the deadly pestilence, would seem to testify of the harsh severity of a wrathful Deity. Cast the human soul out amidst these conflicting testimonies of nature, with no light from on high to reconcile them, and to blend all discordant voices into one harmonious utterance, and, so far from the heart being drawn to God, it might despair to find whether the God of nature were indeed a God of love.

III. Is *the providence of God, then, able to do what nature cannot?* Alas! we are met here by a like impotency. Conflicting testimonies abound here, also. Is there, on the one hand, much peace and comfort? There is, on the other, more strife and want. Here is a land over which peace smiles, there a country desolated by the ravages of war. Here are happy homes, with unbroken family circles; there are darkened apartments and silent halls and cheerless firesides. On the one side, I hear blithe voices, making music in their joy; but again, "the air is filled with sighings and wailings for the dead; the heart of Rachel, for her children mourning, will not be comforted." Thousands bask in wealth; tens of thousands struggle from the cra-

dle to the grave with stern, relentless poverty. The best of men are often the most severely afflicted and sorely persecuted—the basest, oftentimes, most highly exalted. Amidst scenes like these, what is there, apart from this lamp of God, to assure the human mind that the God of providence is a God of love—what to win the love of the heart already dead to Him?

IV. Now, then, the great question returns to us, yet unsolved, how can the heart of man be won to God? For love must be *won*, alone. No other influence can for a moment be allowed to have sway here. "Authority cannot command love. Force cannot implant it. Terror cannot charm it into existence. The threatenings of vengeance may stifle or may repel, but never can call forth love into being."

Love must be won, but *how won?* There was but one power mighty enough to do it, and that power was *love* itself. All the hoarded love of the heart of God towards His erring child must be manifested, to enkindle a return of love. Oh! it seemed as though God, who knew what was in man, knew that in his dark and guilty bosom there was but one solitary hold that he had over him, and that, to reach this, He must put forth all the might of the Godhead in His display of love, and show to man all the yearnings of a Father's heart over a wayward and yet beloved child. And this was done. It was by a love which left nothing more that God could do—a love in which He gave His highest, richest gift. It was a love in which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, embarked all their infinite treasures. It was a love at which angels wondered, in silent adoration and awe. It was a love that could go no higher, for it came from the bosom of the Infinite—God spared not His Son; it was a love that could reach no lower, for it reached to the Cross of ignominy and shame.

This was God's expedient to draw to Him the love of a disaffected and alienated world. This is the meaning of the Cross—love stooping to win the human heart—love triumphing over all difficulties—love making its last and most powerful appeal. And this was the meaning of Jesus when He uttered the wondrous prediction, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me!" He looked beyond "the offence of the Cross," beyond the "stumbling-block" which His death of ignominy might prove to the benighted Jew or contemptuous Greek, and beheld it, "the power of God and the wisdom of God." He knew that even as the hope of the

world's redemption hung upon that last crowning act upon the Cross, His own willing sacrifice as the Lamb of God, "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree," "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" so that lowest depth of humiliation, that most terrible endurance of suffering, that mightiest evidence of the love of God, *must* forever draw the hearts of men to Him. He saw streaming from that Cross mighty and irresistible influences, reaching into far-distant ages, unchanging and unwasting, ever, while time lasted, melting human enmity and obduracy into tenderness and love. He saw unborn generations looking to the spectacle on that Cross, even as the dying Israelites looked to the serpent of brass, and in that look of faith finding life unto their souls. He saw men out of every kindred and people and tribe and tongue "looking upon Him whom they had pierced, and mourning for Him as one mourning for a first-born son." All this, and more than this, passed before the vision of the blessed Saviour, as He uttered these prophetic words. And the vision of this made Him long for the hour of His "*uplifting.*" Even then, "for the joy set before Him"—the joy of drawing all hearts to Him—He longed to "endure the Cross, despising the shame." Already He saw of "the travail of his soul, and was *satisfied.*" Already, it may be, "His ear caught the far-distant shout of His redeemed and glorified church, singing, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!'"

V. Now, let us pass to mark the *fulfilment* of the Redeemer's prediction. How has that strange prophetic utterance been verified? Has the blessed Saviour's vision been realized? Has the Cross, with its scenes of agony and shame, proved a mighty magnet everywhere and in all ages, drawing men to Christ?

To ask the question, is to answer it. Scarcely had He been lifted up upon the tree, ere that *uplifting* began to draw human hearts to the bleeding, suffering Lamb of God. It won the centurion at the foot of the Cross, whose admiring exclamation was, "*truly this was the Son of God!*" It won the crucified malefactor at His side, who believed in Him when all other faith was dead, who hailed Him as King, even while wearing the crown of thorns, and whose spirit, ere the sun had set, ascended with Jesus to Paradise. It won the heart of Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, his brother counsellor, who came and begged His body, wrapped it in costly spices and linen, and bore it to an honored grave. It won three thousand

hearts, between the rising and the setting of a single sun, on that day of Pentecost, when they who were guilty of His blood, found in that blood pardon and peace and cleansing for the soul.

And from that day, the mighty process has gone forward, gathering strength with the lapse of time. "Beginning at Jerusalem," and extending through all the coasts of Israel, thousands of the tribe of Judah were gathered to this their Shiloh, their long-expected Messiah. And as the apostles and evangelists went throughout the civilized world, this was the secret of their wondrous success. They preached the doctrine of the Cross, salvation through the crucified Redeemer; and it was this which drew the nations to His feet, found a response in unnumbered breasts, and soon filled the Roman Empire with the followers of the Lamb. And in every age and period since, among all tribes and nations of the globe, wherever the Cross has been uplifted, wherever Christ crucified has been simply and faithfully proclaimed, innumerable multitudes have been *drawn* to Him, who "have counted all things but loss," that they might win Christ. What countless millions now on earth, and what rejoicing hosts of the redeemed in heaven, "whom no man can number," now stand forth as "a cloud of witnesses" to the fulfilment of the Redeemer's prophecy as He looked forward to His Cross!

That prediction has been fulfilled in us. There was a time in our history when our hearts were cold and dead to His love, and there was no beauty in Him that our souls desired. Now He is to us "the fairest among ten thousand," "the pearl of great price," the rock of our salvation. What has wrought this wondrous change? What has melted our indifference to adoring gratitude and love? One mighty spectacle, the dying Lamb of God, the Lord of glory crucified for us, the matchless love of Jesus, "God in Christ," bearing our sins in His own body on the tree," dying, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

"His love alone
Has broken every barrier down."

VI. It is a study of deepest interest to look along the line of the church's history, and mark how powerfully this great magnet has attracted to Him all that is loftiest and noblest in human character. All along the stream of time, for eighteen centuries, there has sounded, from hymns of praise and wrestlings of prayer, this great response of Christian hearts, "*Unto Him who loved us and gave*

Himself for us and redeemed us by His blood, be glory forever!" Go, search among the dim recesses of the catacombs of ancient Rome, where the early Christians of that city sought refuge from the fury of their persecutors, where they found a sanctuary and a grave; and what name, above all others, everywhere meets your eye, rudely cut into the rock? It is the name of Jesus. *"He sleeps in Jesus;" "she rests in Christ"*—such is the burden of all. *"None but Christ!"* is the silent testimony from the martyr's resting-place. Take the hymns of the church, from its earliest to its latest period, the truest expression of the *heart* of Christendom; and what strain pervades them all, from the songs of Ephraem the Syrian, through the grand old hymns of the middle ages, like the Dies Irae of Thomas De Celano, down to Watts and Wesley, Cowper and Montgomery, but one, the sublime key-note of love to Jesus?

"Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace."

And so take the great names of the church, her elect and kingly spirits, and one common feature stamps them all—the heart *drawn* to Christ, by the power of His love—His love unto death. Hear "that disciple whom Jesus loved," and who leaned upon His bosom, give utterance to the great truth which was the foundation of all his Christian life—*"we love Him because He first loved us!"* Then turn to his very opposite in temperament, the intellectual, logical St. Paul, and ask the secret of his unsurpassed activity and endurance for the Gospel, and this is his reply—*"the love of Christ constraineth me!" "To me to live is Christ!"* Then listen to the fervent and impulsive St. Peter, as from a bursting heart he exclaims, *"Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."* See the love of Mary of Bethany, as she breaks upon His head the costly box of ointment, not too costly for an expression of her devoted love. Recall the memories of Augustine and the saintly Monica, his mother; or Jerome the monk of Bethlehem; or Thomas a Kempis and Fenelon; or Leighton and Herbert and Ken; or Wesley and Doddridge and Fletcher; or Martyn and Brainerd and Payson; and what makes them all one, kindred by one holy tie? It is love to Christ. It is each heart *drawn to* and fixed on Christ, won by the attractive power of His Cross.

But fulfilled as this prediction has been, in every age and among every generation, there is yet a fulfilment on a far grander scale awaiting the words of Jesus. We cannot believe that all the sublime vision which then passed before the mind of the Redeemer has yet been realized. He is "to see of the travail of His soul, and to be *satisfied*." And what will satisfy His great heart of love, less than *the drawing of the whole world to His Cross?*

And this is what the sacred writers everywhere teach us will yet take place. "*The whole world shall be filled with His glory,*" is the testimony of them all. The Psalmist tells of the day when "the heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for His possession;" and as the glory of that day breaks upon His vision, He pictures the redeemed as the countless dewdrops from the womb of the morning, covering the face of the whole earth with dazzling beauty. And the prophet, as he sees the coming of the day when "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord," can only portray its majestic grandeur by the image of the ocean's fulness in its unfathomed depths—"*for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" The Cross is yet to draw all nations; Christ crucified is yet to win the whole world to a willing obedience. Who can doubt that Jesus, in that hour when He said, "now is my soul troubled," looked beyond the Cross, and "*despised*" its bitterness and ignominy in "the joy set before Him" of the whole world filled with converts to His name, every human heart a shrine of love to the Redeemer, every voice joining in the mighty anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

Then "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."

"Arabia's desert ranger
To Him shall bow the knee;
The Ethiopian stranger
His glory come to see.

"With offerings of devotion,
Ships from the isles shall meet,
To pour the wealth of ocean
In tribute at His feet.

"Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;

All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing.

"For He shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore;
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar.

"For Him shall prayer unceasing
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing,
A kingdom without end.

"The mountain dews shall flourish,
A seed in weakness sown;
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish,
And shake like Lebanon.

"O'er every foe victorious,
He on His throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious,
All blessing and all blessed.

"The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove;
His name shall stand forever,
That name to us is Love!"

Glorious as will be this fulfilment of the words of Jesus, may we not believe that they will receive a still sublimer fulfilment? When this world shall have passed away, and the "new heavens and the new earth" shall arise; when all the redeemed, of every age and every land, shall be gathered into the heavenly Jerusalem; when patriarchs and prophets, apostles and evangelists, martyrs and confessors, shall be brought into one eternal home; who but He will be the centre of the mighty multitude, to whom every heart shall turn with rapture and ever-increasing joy? It is the Lamb, whom they will "follow whithersoever He goeth." "We may believe," says a glowing writer, "that throughout eternity Christ will continue to *draw* all men to Him; still will He be the point towards which shall converge whatsoever hath been delivered from the consequences of man's apostacy; still will He be the source of gladness, the well-spring of happiness, to the myriads who have entered heaven through the virtue of His blood; to Him shall the ransomed flock, and around Him shall they congregate, and from Him shall they derive acces-

sions of knowledge and fresh materials of triumph; and this will be the final drawing of the nations. When the men of every age and of every land, linked in indissoluble brotherhood, shall crowd towards the Mediator as their common deliverer, their all in all, and cast their crowns at His feet, and sweep their harps to His praise; oh! then will the prophecy receive its full and splendid accomplishment, and all orders of intelligence, connecting the crucifixion as a cause with this ingathering, will bear its enraptured witness to the thorough verification of the words, 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' "

A word of explanation, and also of warning, is needed in closing. No passage of the Bible sets forth more fully the universality of the atonement, and of the love of Christ. "*I will draw all men*," said the Divine Redeemer; why, then, are not *all hearts* won to Him? Why is there a single soul without the fold of Christ? Alas! He can *only* draw, He cannot *compel;* He can only *attract*, He cannot constrain by force the love of the human heart. Christ died for all; He draws all; He yearns for all; *only those who resist this attraction are excluded from salvation.*

Oh, then! if *this* fail to win the heart, there is nothing else left. Even God Himself can do no more than has been done. The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is His mightiest effort; it is love's costliest gift. In that crowning effort to win the love of man to God, Infinite wisdom and power and love, have exhausted all their resources. And the Divine Father's great and everlasting challenge to every soul, unsaved at last, will be, "*what more could I have done!*"

B. M. Palmer

GRIEVING THE SPIRIT.

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And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.—*Ephesians*, iv, 30.

The essence of Christianity is in the fact that it is the religion of a *sinner*. It discloses, indeed, a system of morals which, viewed in its principles or in its aim, is as far superior to that of the academy or of the porch, as the heavens are lifted above the earth. This, however, is wholly incidental. Its main design is to extricate the sinner from the state of ruin in which he is found, and to teach him how to escape the damnation of hell. All ethical systems are but compilations of dry rules, intended simply to regulate the external conduct, and presuppose the ability to comply with the same. However clearly they may state duties and enforce motives, they can never rise above the office of mere instruction. If man's will be averse, they propose no remedy for this fundamental defect, and have no resources by which to rectify the inward nature which is stubborn or impure. Hence, all the beautiful systems of morality which men have devised, have proved inefficient in reforming the vices of mankind.

In like manner, all the systems of false religion upon the globe content themselves with our external relations alone. They propose rites by which to propitiate the divine favor and to pacify the human conscience. Not one suggests the idea of a change of heart, by which the sinner shall become fit for communion with God, or capable of new obedience to His holy law. Their forms of worship are but the incantations of religious magic, by which to break the spell of divine wrath; not acts of spiritual communion with a Being of infinite purity and love. But Christianity—whilst, on the one hand,

it republishes the original law, and adds new and superior sanctions of its own—assumes, on the other hand, that the sinner can never fulfil its commands; and reveals a method by which he may be saved, so as both to love and to obey. It answers the solemn question of Job, "how should man be just with God;" and solves the mighty problem of sin, by showing how "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other"—how "truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Its fundamental teachings must therefore touch two points, *pardon* and *the new birth*, as these expand into the complete justification and sanctification of the sinner. Around these two centres gather all the doctrines of the Gospel. Around the first are collected such facts as the incarnation of the Son of God, His voluntary substitution for us under the law, His expiatory sufferings and death, His perfect and vicarious obedience, His whole priesthood as discharged both on earth and in heaven. Around the second are attracted all the truths which enter into a full exposition of the person and office of the Holy Ghost; as He enlightens the sinner's mind, arouses the sinner's conscience, renews the sinner's heart; and comforts, seals, sanctifies, and glorifies, the believer.

The text, it will be perceived, falls into the latter of these two divisions. It is a remarkable fact, that most of the references in Scripture to the Holy Ghost occur in connection with His work upon the hearts of the professed people of God. With the exception of a limited number of passages, some of which are of doubtful interpretation—and with the exception always of that fearful denunciation, in the twelfth chapter of Matthew, of the sin against the Holy Ghost—the instructions, exhortations, promises, and warnings, of the Bible, in regard to this person of the Godhead, are addressed primarily to the church, rather than to the aliens without her pale. The text furnishes an illustration of this. Those whom it urges not to grieve the Holy Spirit are, beyond question, such as have already professed faith in Jesus Christ. In preceding verses they are discriminated from other Gentiles who walk in vanity; they are described as persons who have "learned Christ," "have put off the old man," and "put on the new man;" and as "renewed in the spirit of their mind." The exhortation of the text occurs in the midst of others which imply the desire of the Christian to conform his life to the Gospel standard. And the great motive by which this exhorta-

tion is enforced, the sealing of the Spirit, refers not to His first influence upon the hearts of the impenitent, but presupposes union with Christ and the existence of true faith; as this apostle elsewhere testifies, "in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." If it were prudent to offer an explanation of this striking fact, it might be suggested, that as the later and more full operations of the Spirit within the Christian presuppose and involve His earlier influences upon the sinner, both classes are compendiously embraced in the references which seem to be addressed only to one. By a natural and even necessary deduction, we carry over these expostulations from the church to the world, from the Christian to the unconverted sinner, as being by necessary implication embraced. Since none come to Christ save those who are effectually called, at every step of the sinner's return to God he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by whom this call is mediated; who may therefore as well be resisted and grieved in the first stage, when He convinces of sin, as at the last stage of our sanctification, when we are made meet for the saints' inheritance in light. But whatever explanation may be offered, there is no difficulty in the widest extension of the language of the text. Since, from first to last, we must feel the power of the Holy Ghost, at any stage from first to last of our career, we are in danger of grieving Him; and the exhortation is quite as pointed to the sinner as to the saint.

In this large application, then, of the text to all classes of men with whom this Spirit may be dealing, I propose to *consider the reasons why none should permit themselves to grieve Him.*

I. *Because of the solemnity of so personal and recognised a contact with God.*

We are at all times in contact with God, and surrounded with His presence. There is no hiding place within the universe, which is not penetrated by the eye of His omniscience, and covered by the hand of His protection. "Whither shall we go from His Spirit, or whither shall we flee from His presence? If we ascend into heaven, He is there; if we make our bed in hell, behold, He is there. If we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall His hand lead us, and His right hand shall uphold us; even the night shall be light about us; the darkness and the light are both alike to Him." Yet is this dreadful truth not always so discovered to us as to enlist the devotional senti-

ment of the soul. But if our sensibilities be not utterly blunted, and conscience entirely seared, there are seasons when we must feel solemnly impressed as God draws more nearly and personally in contact with us. In times of sickness, when our couch is watered with tears, and the strong man is bowed down with pain and "brought into the dust of death;" in seasons of bereavement, when God "darkens the earth in the clear day," and death comes in at the window, and we are shut up to solitary communion with our own sad and bitter thoughts; in the pestilence, when the angel of death flaps his black wing over the city, and the mourners go about the streets, and there is not a house which does not weep for its dead; in the famine, when "the seven ears are withered, thin, and blasted" on the stalk, and want, like a grim and ghastly spectre, strides over the land, snatching the black crust from the mouths of crying babes; when war, with his bloody heel, treads upon the whitening bones of his slaughtered victims, and the widow's wail mingles with the orphan's cry in a concert of anguish; in the storm and tempest, when hoarse thunders roll down the pavement of the sky, or startling peals discharge in one volley the whole artillery of heaven, and the sharp lightnings cleave the clouds like the flashing swords of angry cherubim: who, then, does not stand in silent awe, and tremble before these symbols of the divine majesty and presence? We speak not here of that slavish terror which quails before the mere thought of Almighty force; but of that holy dread, which may fill the bosom even of a seraph, as he looks uncovered upon the face of Jehovah's throne. Yet not in one nor all of these does God come so nigh or make such disclosures of His presence, as when by His Holy Spirit He enters within the sanctuary of the human breast. In all these acts of providence, however near God may be, and with whatsoever closeness of pressure, He is still *without* us; but through His Spirit the shadow of His awful presence is cast within the veil, and meets us alone in the sacred chambers of the soul. He lays His holy hand upon our very thoughts, turns the current of our affections into new channels, and makes the heart beat with the pulse of a new and strange life.

Shall we not exclaim, with the prophet, when he saw the skirts of the divine glory filling the temple, "woe is me! for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" We may therefore endorse this, "the argument of reverence;" and store it in the heart, that we may "not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

II. *Because He draws near to us only to bring home to our hearts the overtures of God's infinite love.*

Have you ever considered the fact that the Holy Ghost is the only person of the Godhead whose name is not associated with offices of terror and of wrath? The Father, as first in the order of thought, is the original fountain of all authority. By Him the Son is sent into the world, and the seal of His commission gives validity to all the Mediator's acts. To Him the glory of all Christ's miracles, and the wisdom of all His doctrines, are continually referred. The whole work which He finished upon earth was the work which the Father gave Him to do. As the sacred three, in the language of Erskine, "sat together around the council board of redemption," in the distribution of offices there made, the Father assumed to be the representative of the Godhead, to hold in His hands the divine law, and the reins of universal empire. It belongs officially to Him to "reveal from heaven the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" to execute the penalty upon the sinner, or else upon his substitute; and to pass the judicial decree, by which the one and the other are justified and declared righteous together. Of course, it is impossible to think of Him but as clothed with "terrible majesty." "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne." "When He is wroth, the earth trembles," and "the perpetual hills do bow." "When He thundereth in the heavens, and the Highest giveth His voice, hailstones and coals of fire pass before Him." "At the blast of the breath of His nostrils, the channels of waters are seen, the foundations of the earth are discovered." Under this gorgeous imagery, in which the whole frame of nature is seen dissolving at His presence, do the Scriptures represent the awful majesty of God, and the supremacy of His jurisdiction as a lawgiver and a judge.

In like manner, the Son, though He is the author of grace, has another revelation of Himself as full of terror as that is of mercy. He is not only the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but also the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who shall rend the wicked in His fury. Over His Cross may indeed be read the inscription, "God so loved the world;" yet beyond and against that Cross may be seen the throne of His power, beneath which all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, are seen to be

put. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" "for He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." In the last great assize, all nations shall be gathered before Him; He shall come in the clouds of heaven, with His own glory and with the glory of His Father, and "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn," as He shall sit upon the great white throne, and pronounce the sentences of destiny. Amidst the terrors of a burning world, when the heavens are rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the wicked are represented with awful significance as calling upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from "the wrath of the Lamb." Paradoxical as the expression may seem, there is no phrase in all the Scriptures more full of woe or pregnant with despair than this, "the wrath of the Lamb." Certainly, no one can go around the circle of Christ's offices without solemn dread of the commission He is hereafter to execute as the Judge of quick and dead.

If, however, we turn from these to the person of the Holy Ghost, He sustains, in the economy of grace, no office but that of tenderness and love. Though equal with the Father and the Son, He descends upon no "mount that may be touched," surrounds Himself with no "blackness and darkness and tempest," speaks not to us "with the sound of trumpet" nor with "the voice of words." No symbols of dreadful majesty strike through the soul with terror when He makes His advent. With quiet yet resistless power, He gently slides into the breast, and speaks the words of love by which the stubborn sinner is so sweetly persuaded. May the pulpit ever be restrained from uttering a sentence which shall abate our conceptions of the Saviour's infinite compassion and grace! It was surely a "love which passeth knowledge" that brought Him from the bosom of the Father, to "endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself." The extent of His condescension cannot be measured, unless we could penetrate the fellowship of the Godhead, and know the wealth of the Father's love eternally lavished upon Him. Nor, unless we could estimate the recoil of His holy nature from all sin, can we appreciate the compassion which led Him to bear the dishonor and shame of our sin, and to cry out, in His anguish, "Reproach hath broken My heart."

But let us not, on the other hand, disparage the equal condescension of the Eternal Spirit, when He descends into the heart, which is as "a cage of unclean birds," and brings His purity into contact with all the taint and defilement of our nature. This is the love of the Son, that He "became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" and this is the love of the Spirit, that no uncleanness ever shuts Him out from the soul He would purge and render fit for communion with God. The very name by which His official work is defined describes His compassion; He is the Comforter. Though He "reproves the world of sin" "and of judgment to come," it is by the exhibition between the two of that righteousness by which the one is covered and the other is stripped of its terrors; and through Him the promise is fulfilled to the mourner, that he shall be comforted. He is therefore pre-eminently the expounder of God's love, bringing it home to us in the hour of despair, and making it the hope and joy of the soul forever. We may therefore endorse this, "the argument of gratitude;" and lay it up in the memory, that we may "not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption." Our affections yield to the voice of human kindness, as the strings of the Æolian harp give responsive music to the soft breath of summer. Shall not this argument, appealing to "the memory of the heart," touch every sentiment that is noble and generous within us? And what damning proof of the sinner's enmity against God is given, when he is not subdued by this argument of love!

III. *Because, if ever saved, it must be through this very influence of the Spirit which we are here exhorted to recognise.*

Nothing is more common than to parry the warnings and expostulations of the Bible by the flippant excuse, "I do not know that I am chosen to salvation." Does the sinner know with any more certainty, on the other hand, that he is appointed to destruction? Can he ascertain either except by the result? Does anything remain to him but to "make his own calling and election sure"—"working out his own salvation with fear and trembling," knowing that "it is God which worketh in him to will and to do of His good pleasure?" And will he permit us to say, with all possible affection, yet with as much frankness, that this language is on his lips as foolish as it is wicked, as absurd as it is profane? The secret purposes of God can never be to him a rule of action, simply because they *are* secret;

and for the same reason, they can never be the motive by which he is constrained on the one hand to receive Christ, nor upon the other to reject Him. By the very constitution of our nature, that cannot be to us a controlling law nor an operative motive, which is to us totally unknown. It is therefore in accordance not only with the modesty of true piety, but also with the maxims of sound philosophy, when the Scriptures say that "secret things belong to God, but the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children." Not only ought the sinner to act only under the influence of the latter, but it is simply impossible that he *can* act under the influence of the former. He who supposes his decision to be affected in the one direction or in the other by the undiscovered purposes of God, passes upon his understanding a most singular delusion. Undoubtedly, the sinner may resent the fact that God has purposes which He chooses not to disclose, and, with a peevishness that would be ludicrous if it were not fraught with consequences so terrible, may continue to resist the divine supremacy, to his own everlasting discomfiture. But these purposes themselves, so long as they are closely veiled from his view, can never constitute the reasons of his choice. It is one thing to be angry with God because He *has* purposes, and another thing to be determined, in this direction or in that, by the discovery of what these purposes are. If they be wholly unknown, they afford no reason by which the judgment can be influenced; and to suppose a decision resting upon them, is to suppose an effect without a cause. If it be said the sinner's embarrassment proceeds from this very suspense arising out of his ignorance of God's will in regard to him, this assumes that God's will, if ascertained, would be a controlling motive to obedience. But God's will is known in what He actually reveals. He "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Jesus Christ is sincerely offered, with the assurance that whosoever believeth shall be saved; and, with this promise, the Holy Spirit is freely given, that the sinner may both believe and repent. Why should not this suffice, if the discovery of God's will be only wanting as the sufficient motive to determine the choice? We submit that the sinner's reasoning should be precisely the reverse of what is implied in the flippant language which we now rebuke. Let him argue thus: I read in the record that none are saved but those who come to Christ; that none come to Christ but those whom the Father draws; that none are drawn but by the power of the Holy Ghost.

That blessed agency, which is so indispensable, is now experienced by me. Instead, therefore, of pausing to pry into the deep things of God, which are reserved for the disclosures of the great day, I am encouraged, by this collation of facts, to yield myself freely to that mysterious power which can alone conduct me to the feet of Jesus. Let the sinner take, further, the testimony of all the redeemed. Let him summon the thousand witnesses for Christ now upon the earth, and then the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, whom John saw before the throne, and, without dissent, they will all testify, that by just such power as he now begins to feel, were they brought into a state of salvation. They, just as he, were roused from apathy, and were made to feel the powers of the world to come; they, just as he must, were led to "loathe and abhor themselves," and to "cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus." Then, by all that he now feels, may he hope that a good work is begun within him, which will be carried on till the day of Christ. The true deduction leads not to despondency and cavil, but to hope and joyful trust; for he can be saved only through those influences which are now consciously experienced, and which he is exhorted to cherish. We may, then, endorse this, "the argument of interest;" and let it restrain the sinner from foolishly perilling his salvation by grieving now away the Holy Spirit of God.

IV. *Because the Scriptures hedge about the office and work of the Holy Ghost with very solemn and peculiar sanctions.*

It has been already said that He is the only person of the Godhead who sustains no office of wrath, and is attended by no symbols of terrible majesty. This, however, is one of those partial truths which might mislead, unless qualified by the statements now to be made. Perhaps, for this reason, His person and office are guarded by the most fearful warning found within the Bible. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men; and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." It thus appears, "there is a sin unto death"—one form of transgression which is excepted from all hope of pardon, which the infinite goodness of God refuses to cover, and for which the prayer of intercession may not be offered; *and that sin*

can only be committed against the person of the Holy Ghost. It may be irreverent to inquire into the reasons of this remarkable limitation. Perhaps it is because the Holy Spirit is the third and last person of the adorable Trinity, so that he who sins finally and fatally against Him has sinned past the entire Godhead. He that transgresseth against the person and law of the Father may yet be forgiven through the infinite merits and prevalent intercessions of the Son; and he that sins against the person and office of the Son, may yet be overtaken by the resistless might and grace of the Spirit; but when the Spirit is grieved away, there remains behind no other person who may gather up the resources of the Godhead, and bring them to the sinner's rescue. Or, perhaps it is because to the Holy Ghost is assigned the office of applying the scheme of redemption; so that he who sins against Him finally has sinned against the Gospel in its last stage, just where it is intended to bear upon human destiny; and having sinned past the scheme of grace, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." Or, it may be in compensation for the lowliness of the Spirit's condescension; because, in discharging the office of Comforter, He must come with a gentleness that shall not alarm the timid soul, and descend into contact with the lowest impurity of the sinner's heart; because he must stand thus seemingly defenceless before the sinner, and submit to all the outrage of the sinner's resistance and scorn, therefore He must bear this solemn seal of the Father and the Son, who throw around his person the sanctions of their own official greatness and severity. But without pausing, with prurient curiosity, to pry into the reasons of this awful warning, the fact itself, in its fearful solemnity, is sufficient for us. Trifle not with this person of the Trinity, since the one sin which God will never forgive is, and can be, perpetrated only against Him. Nor is it essential to the import of this warning, that we should define precisely the nature of this sin. That it is special, and does not involve every act of resistance, is evident; since, otherwise, the whole human race would be cut off from the hope of salvation. Which one of all the redeemed, on earth or in heaven, but consciously has, at some stage in his career, resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit? This dreadful offence, therefore, described under the strong term of blasphemy, must import something more than the ordinary resistance of the unrenewed will.

It must imply a confirmed and malignant opposition of the soul to holiness and God, such as can alone admit the wilful and habitual traducing of the Holy Ghost in the fulfilment of His glorious and benign mission. But, even in this view, the warning is not the less significant. It may be presented thus: He that consciously sins against the Spirit, in the face of such a woe here denounced, has no guaranty that he may not be judicially abandoned of God to sin *that* sin which shall never be remitted. This side of the judgment bar, there are awful sanctions by which Jehovah guards both His law and the Gospel of His grace; and the most fearful of these is the withholding of His restraints, and punishing sin by allowing the commission of other sins which are deeper. Your present resistance of the Holy Ghost may not be "*the sin* which is unto death," but it may be the first step in the path of declension which terminates in that fearful abyss. Grieved by ordinary and persistent rejection, this blessed agent, whose commission is sealed by the Father and the Son, may depart; and He that sitteth upon the throne may lift His right hand in the dreadful oath, "My Spirit shall no more strive!" The withering sentence may be pronounced, "Let him alone!" Thus judicially abandoned, with all the restraints of providence and grace withdrawn, the sinner may go on from sin to sin, until the last dreadful act of treason is consummated in the blasphemy against God's Eternal Spirit. We may therefore endorse this, "the argument of warning;" and, by the terrors of the Lord, persuade the sinner not to trifle with the thunders of Jehovah's Word. Rise not up now, in the stubbornness of your pride, and say, "We will not be frightened into submission by the echoes of a penalty like this." Remember that the language of bravado is always the language of cowardice and of falsehood. It is right to be afraid of God, when He speaks to us in the majesty of His law. And when these warnings come as the foreshadowing of His stern retributive justice, and are addressed to our judgment and conscience, rather than to our sense of fear, they can only be disregarded by the recklessness that is blind, or by the folly that is mad. The flaming sword which turneth every way guards the person of that Divine Spirit, who comes to the sinner the last exponent of God's infinite love. He who rushes upon that sword dies by the hand of God; while mercy and love, outraged and despised by the sinner, vindicate themselves by echoing the decree which inflexible justice both issues and executes.

But some one may arise here and say, Of all this, we are deeply persuaded; there is no fault more grave, and no calamity more fatal, than to grieve away the Holy Spirit; if we know ourselves, there is no crime from which we shrink with greater dread; tell us how we may be saved from an offence of such awful magnitude. The demand is reasonable, for doubtless there are many who would not designedly do despite to the Spirit of Grace, who nevertheless, in their blindness, pursue a course which leads to this dreadful issue. It is of immense concern to such, to know the principal ways in which this may inadvertently be done.

I. *Many grieve the Spirit by their unwillingness to own that they are under His influence and feel His power.*

Those who are called to deal with awakened souls are aware how studiously these religious exercises are screened from the view of others. Nor have we the right to complain of this, so far as it springs from that natural reserve which God has cast, as a veil of concealment, over all the sacred and tender affections of the soul. It is never easy to speak out the sentiments even of natural affection into the ears of a stranger; and we speedily lose respect for those who can babble forth all their inner feelings in the shambles and in the market place, which should be reserved for self-communion, or at least for the confidential disclosures of intimate friendship. That veil of secrecy should not be rudely drawn aside or rent, which a true and instinctive delicacy draws around the heart; and which, as a principle of our nature, God has implanted, that we may be protected from the profane and intrusive gaze of our fellow men. It is not of this we complain, that anxious sinners are reluctant to make us the depositaries of their religious secret. However we may regret that want of confidence which renders unavailing our wisdom and experience, an unquestioned right alone is exercised, which no one may lawfully challenge. But the indisposition to acknowledge, even to themselves, the source and nature of their distress, is what we censure. How many are peevish and fretful when no adequate cause exists without them for this disquietude, who would discover, if they would institute an inquiry, that it is God Himself by whom they are troubled. He has "stirred up their nest," and therefore they are ill at ease! To live day by day in this discomposure of soul, and never ask wherefore they droop; not to cease the din and clatter of life long enough to ask who it is that knocketh at the door of the heart,

and seeks admission—this is to grieve the Spirit of God, by sad inattention to the signs of His presence, and by slothful disregard to the calls of His love. An earthly friend, however dear, would turn away from our door at such rebuffs, nor could he be pacified without acknowledgment and sorrow for the wrong. Is it strange that the Holy Ghost should suspend His importunate solicitations, and leave the sinner that is deaf to all his entreaties to reap the fruit of his folly in bitter disappointment and sorrow?

II. *Others grieve the Holy Ghost by laboring to extinguish their convictions, and escape present distress, without repentance and confession.*

Transparent candor is due to all earnest searchers after truth—the same candor exhibited by our blessed Lord, when He said, "Whosoever will not take up his cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple." So we are bound to say to all who would press into His Kingdom, it is through sorrow and pain this entrance must be gained; for the gate is strait, and none enter but through striving. The agonies of the second birth, like the pains of the first, must be felt by all who would see the light. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that a man should wake up to the fact that he is vile before God, and that in him dwelleth no good thing, without torture of soul. The misfortune and guilt of multitudes is, that they will not undergo that distress which is antecedent to all relief. They desire to be comforted, without the mourning to which the promise of comfort is annexed. Hence the effort, at every hazard, to throw off the sense of pain. Hence the lamentation of God, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." In the very crisis of their fate, instead of "repenting in dust and ashes"—instead of "being in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first born"—they plunge with frantic haste into anything that will for the time hush the upbraidings of conscience, or extract the sting of remorse. They addict themselves to business, and steep themselves in care; they mingle in society, and drown the voice of the monitor within amid scenes of pleasure; they lock up the heart in a cold and stony stoicism; anything but listen to the Spirit's reproof, when He "convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come." What is this but mad resistance of the Holy Ghost, by which all His blessed influences are quenched, perhaps forever?

III. *Others still grieve the Spirit by too sedulous cultivation of the emotions, till they evaporate in mere sentiment and feeling.*

The universal complaint of men, when pressed with the duty of faith in Christ, is, that they do not *feel enough*. Even where the sad blunder is not committed of supposing this mental anguish to be in some sort expiatory and atoning for the past, the fatal delusion exists, that from this agony, as a preparatory discipline, it will be easier to pass into the peace which the Saviour gives. Instead, therefore, of turning at once to Him under the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit, they turn back upon themselves, and press the law with all its sharp points in upon the conscience, that they may bleed at every pore. To their utter dismay, they come by this process at last not to feel at all. Yet, no one acquainted with the laws of our nature, but could predict the result. By the very constitution of the human soul, these emotions are not to be produced by efforts expended directly upon the emotions themselves. They are in their nature so subtle as to escape in the very act of handling; like those volatile essences which preserve their life only when confined, these emotions evaporate as soon as they are drawn forth to be discussed and strengthened. What living man ever succeeded in producing the sentiment of the beautiful, or of the sublime, by putting himself through a logical process to show that he *ought* thus to feel? The argument shall be convincing; but the heart will remain as insensible as the iceberg under a polar moon. The Scriptures, with a far more accurate knowledge of man's nature, recognise the triple powers with which he is endowed, and address him as a being capable of thought, feeling, and action. They reveal God glorious in holiness, and man sunk in sin, that his thoughts may be stirred within him. Inasmuch as, by the relation subsisting between these faculties, thought tends to elicit feeling, the Holy Ghost deepens these reflections into conviction and mourning. But He does not now draw a charmed circle around the man, or throw the heart back upon itself, that it may be lashed into frenzy. The Bible nowhere presents a graduated scale of feeling, that the sinner may watch and wait until the mercury rises in the tube to the boiling point. It recognises, on the contrary, the great principle that feeling should at once take concrete form, and embody itself in corresponding action—and that emotion, which is not allowed thus to shape itself outwardly in the appropriate act, dies within itself. It comes therefore at once with its great com-

mand to *believe* in that Saviour whom it reveals. He who wishes to feel more intensely the vileness of sin, must look out upon that holiness of God with which it is in dreadful contrast. He who wishes to feel greater contrition, and more tender sorrow, must look forth with a trustful faith upon that Saviour through whom alone he can be brought to genuine penitence. All these acts of the soul reflect back upon each other. If thought engenders feeling, it is in turn quickened by that very feeling which it produces. If feeling tends to shape itself in the outward act, it is reciprocally intensified by the very energy of its own development. It is precisely here the sinner's great error is committed. Contradicting all the known laws of our spiritual economy, he strives to deepen his emotions by a direct effort upon them, instead of yielding prompt obedience to the great practical command of the Gospel, which rouses him to immediate faith in Christ, and which the Holy Ghost now enforces upon the conscience. What though, within the magic circle in which he has bound his heart with a spell, he should, contrary to known experience, burn and blaze before God with all the ardor of a seraph! It is only that the heart may be consumed in the intensity of its emotions, to fall back at last into its own ashes, a charred and blackened ruin! And what is this but a mad attempt to find salvation within ourselves, to create a Saviour in our own emotions! What is it but to reject and grieve that Holy Spirit of God, who, in accordance with the very laws of our being, would lead us forth from our misery and guilt, to rest upon the bosom of our God in Christ!

IV. *Finally, thousands grieve the Spirit by the postponement of present duty to a future day.*

After a few fitful efforts, the sinner sinks down in sheer exhaustion, and hopes that what seems impossible to-day will be practicable and easy to-morrow. Is it necessary to show how this offends God and grieves the Holy Ghost? Is it nothing to trench upon God's prerogative, who alone has to-morrow in His gift? Put your finger upon your pulse, and remember that life is measured out to us in each single beat, that we may feel our dependence upon the supreme will of Him in whom we live and move. Is it nothing to trifle with God's command, which covers every inch of our time with its own immediate duty? Is it nothing to mock that august person who knocks at the sinner's heart, and make Him bend to our indolence or caprice?

"There's no prerogative in human hours.
In human hearts what bolder thought can rise,
Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
Where is to-morrow? In another world!
And yet on this, perhaps,
This peradventure, infamous for lies,
As on a rock of adamant, we build
Our mountain hopes, and spin eternal schemes,
As we the fatal sisters would outspin,
And, big with life's futurities, expire."

Every command of God's law binds the present moment, and every offer of the Gospel is made equally in the present. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" He who uses up his morrow in fruitless resolutions of amendment, then, is like the spendthrift who anticipates his income, and overwhelms his fortune with the debts of the past.

"A man's life is a tower, with a staircase of many steps,
That, as he toileth upward, crumble successively behind him;
No going back, the past is an abyss; no stopping, for the present perisheth;
But ever hasting on, precarious on the foothold of to-day.
Our cares are all to-day; our joys are all to-day;
And in one little word, our life, what is it but—to-day?"

Sinner! now be wise. Reflect, that as you cannot, without fraud, anticipate the future which is yet with God, so neither can you recall the past, that has gone beforehand to the judgment bar. On this isthmus of the present alone you stand, with the momentous interests of eternity crowded with you upon its narrow space. This NOW, which is "ticking from the clock of time," is past, even as you have counted it, speeding along with its truthful testimony against your neglect and sin, if now you grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

J. Geo. Butler.

CHRIST AND THE BELIEVER INSEPARABLE.

BY REV. J. GEORGE BUTLER,

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Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—*Romans*, viii, 35.

You cannot too carefully examine the evidence of your love to Jesus. It *should* cause you anxious thought. Lovest thou Me? says the Saviour to every Gospel hearer. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, says the great Apostle, let him be anathema maranatha.

"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

Happy if, with penitent Peter, even though you have oft grieved and denied your heart-knowing Master, you may appeal to Him for the sincerity of your love. Then shall you surely see Him as He is, and love Him as you ought and as you desire.

But our text directs our thoughts to a contemplation of *Christ's love to us.* It is in a conviction of this that our love to Him begins. "We love Him because He first loved us." It is this love of the Saviour to us—a love that passeth knowledge, that leads to repentance—that inspires hope, and faith, and charity. It is this love, shed abroad in the heart, that constrains to a life of obedience, and toil, and self-denial, in His service. It is the conviction of the love of Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, that sustains, and comforts, and cheers, the soul of the humble believer, in the midst of trial and suffering. It is because of the wonderful love of Christ to *me*, a poor sinner, that I know that He will keep that which I have committed to Him against the great day; that He, my Good Shepherd, who has laid down His life for the sheep, will never suffer those who hear His voice, and follow Him, to perish; that none shall be able to pluck them out of His hand. Blessed Word of the Lord Jesus!

But how may I know that Christ loves me? That He loves the unfallen spirits of heaven, who have ever delighted to pay Him homage, I have no doubt. The blood-washed, redeemed from earth, clothed with immortal blessedness, where they neither weep nor sin more, *they* feel the warm gushings of His loving heart. They can never doubt, for they no longer walk by faith, but see face to face. Oh! that, like them, I might feel the warm beatings of His loving heart, and hear His words of tenderness. But how, in this world of sin, offending every day, with this vile heart, with marks of my unworthiness and unfaithfulness, my secret and open sins ever before me, may I indeed hope that Christ loves *me!* Is that the thought that tears your anxious breast? Peace, troubled soul! God so loved the world—*the world*—that He gave His only-begotten Son. He came not to condemn, but that the world—*the world*—through Him might be saved. And "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us *all*, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Yes—in the gift of the *Son*, the believer has the assurance that every other thing necessary to complete the work—to crown the redeemed and honor the Redeemer—will freely be given. Whilst the Cross stands, I have a pledge of the purpose of the Father to save me, my wondering eye and loving heart being fixed there.

But for *me* did He die? do you ask—for me, whose heart has never been warmed by the recital of Gethsemene and Calvary—for me, who hate Him, who have blasphemed His name and trampled under foot His blood—for *me*, who am ever changing, though called by His name—"now hot, now cold, now freeze, now burn"—has He died, has He risen, does He intercede for me? Oh! if a sinner, lost, despairing, He came to seek and save you. Jesus Christ, says the inspired Apostle, by the grace of God, tasted death for *every man*—for you, individually, just as fully as though no other sinner needed redemption. For when we were without strength, says Paul, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*. For scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us. All the weary and heavy laden—every one that thirsteth—

> "All the fitness He requireth
> Is to feel your need of Him."

The Spirit and the bride say come; all heaven invites; they only shall be lost who *will not* come to Christ. Ye who disbelieve His Word, and harden yourselves against His providence, and resist His Spirit, ye are that barren fig-tree. But for the pleadings of this loving and ever-living Intercessor, you would have been cut down as cumberers of the ground. His loving arm stays the avenging blow of justice. And, in deciding for or against Christ, it is not, whether you choose annihilation or heaven, but whether you prefer heaven or hell. This wonderful love work of the Redeemer has secured life to all who died in Adam. *All* that are in their graves shall come forth, some to the resurrection of glory, some to the resurrection of damnation. In considering the love of Christ, it is for you to decide whether you will be

——"with the damned cast out, or
Numbered with the blest."

This Christ's love to me as a *sinner*—that is the ground of my hope, and source of my peace, and love, and joy. Bowed down beneath a load of sin, I rejoice in the assurance that Christ is my advocate, and that His blood cleanseth from all sin.

"This precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

To illustrate more fully the depth and tenderness of this inseparable love of Jesus, let us look at some of the relations in which He presents Himself to us in these Scriptures, which we should search daily, because they testify of Him.

He is our *friend*—calls us His friends. He is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother—the friend in need—the one above all others—the friend of sinners—

"Which of all our friends, to save us,
Could or would have shed his blood."

He is thy tried friend, His is an unchanging love—faithful, strong as death. He is thy *son*, thy *brother*. He that doeth the will of my Father, the same is my mother and sister and brother. His is a filial heart—a fraternal love. When on earth, subject to His parents, mark how He cared for His mother, even when on the Cross—and His love is still as great. He is the brother born for adversity.

And what more beautifully sets forth the tender love of Jesus to

His followers, than that oft allusion to the conjugal relation. In the Old Testament and in the New, how frequently does Jehovah-Jesus present Himself as the *Bridegroom*—the Husband of the church, the Lamb's wife; the husband her Redeemer, that she might be presented without spot or wrinkle, as a chaste virgin, when the marriage supper shall be celebrated, amid the hallelujahs that fill the Father's house. What relation so full of tenderness and confidence and permanence as this? True, sin in ten thousand instances makes it a curse; but sanctified in Christ, as fellow heirs of the grace of life, the Christian *home*, even in this sin-stricken world, presents the brightest type of heaven that earth affords. Jesus thy Redeemer is thine, thy husband. And would He impress yet more the tender faithfulness of His love—"as one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will I comfort you." A mother's love! Poets, with all their rich imagery, have not fathomed it. What pictures for the artist! The mother watching, praying, by the bed of a dying, it may be of a disobedient, ungrateful child. Poverty and peril, by flood or fire, only test the strength of a mother's love. How tender your yearning heart, mother, whether aroused by the sweet prattle of innocency, the sighs of pain, or shrieks of danger. Even a mother may forget her infant, helpless child, but Jehovah-Jesus will never forget thee.

This is the love of Christ for thee, *the* love, as the apostle calls it, infinite as the unsearchable, boundless nature of its divine author.

It is, as the mind of the inspired Paul reverts to the councils of eternity, when earth was to be redeemed by blood, and no sacrifice was found but the Lamb—as he contemplates, amid the shouts of angels, the incarnation of Deity—with His life of poverty and toil, terminated by the scenes of the garden and Calvary—as he looks at the risen and interceding Redeemer, exalted as a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins—with love, love, love, as its beginning and end, that he asks in triumph—*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* I see the apostle—as, in the infancy of the church, he followed the Redeemer at the cost of tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and nakedness, and famine, and peril, and sword, and death, daily—looking away from these things to Christ, as his wisdom, and righteousness, and strength, and refuge; and am prepared for the triumph of faith, as he challenges the universe. Christ's love is his anchor. In all these things he is more than conqueror, through Him that loved him. Neither

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

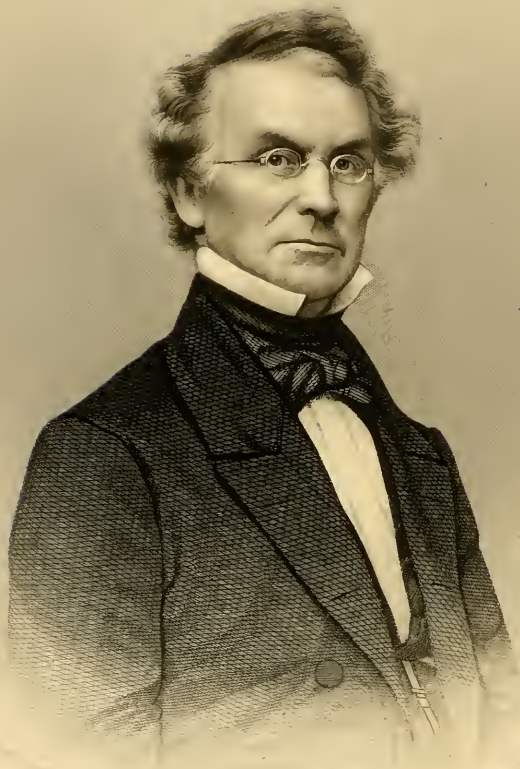
Many of these things were then, and are now, incident to a life of devotion in the service of the Master. By reason of abounding iniquity, the love of many a professed disciple waxes cold. Abounding worldliness, enticements to sin, poverty, bereavement, disappointment, affliction—these are the means which God uses, at once, to root up the plants which He has not planted, and to root and ground the believer in the love of Jesus. The faith and love of the believer are to be tried. It is to be a furnace trial, too, and woe to him whose faith stands in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God—the enmity of whose heart has not been eradicated—who has not the filial spirit of obedience, and submission, and love. Only he that *endures* to the end, shall be saved. The precious metal is put into the crucible, not to destroy, but to purify it. I fear not for the true child of God in the furnace, for the Son of man, the blessed Redeemer, is with him and will not suffer him to be destroyed. He shall only be purified and refined, made meet for the Master's service here, and fitted for the incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading inheritance there.

These things may pluck up the tares, may change your earthly friends. They, like the friends of Job, may come only to censure and condemn, but they cannot separate you from the love of Christ. Ah! is it not in need, and trial, and affliction, and bereavement, that the affection of all these relations—friend, son, brother, husband, mother—is intensified? In all the sufferings of those we love, do not we suffer? Yea, quietness and peace may fortify the heart of our suffering, dying friend, but are not our hearts lacerated and bleeding? That would not be a true friend, a filial child, a faithful brother, loyal husband, a loving mother, whose affection any trial could diminish. I am persuaded that we have an High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities—who bears our sicknesses and sorrows, as well as our sins—who was tried in all points as we are—who, for love of us, died, and nothing shall separate us from His love.

In view of this love, is not his condemnation just, who will not love the Lord Jesus Christ—the one altogether lovely?

Here is encouragement for God's afflicted, tempted people. Nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ—the Saviour whom they love though unseen. Be thou faithful unto death, and He will give thee the crown of life.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.



W. Adams

EXTERNAL ASSOCIATIONS CONNECTED WITH THE BIBLE.

BY REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE MADISON SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, N. Y.

Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.—*Psalms*, cxix, 111.

When we set ourselves to investigate the secret of that power which the Bible now exerts, and is destined to exert in larger measure hereafter, we find that there is an influence accompanying the sacred volume, altogether distinct from the truth of its contents. This book is not a novelty, just put into our hands for the first time, so that all the interest it can excite must depend upon the interest of what it contains. It is a monument of antiquity. It is an object related to the history of the world for many centuries. It is a relic of the past, not worn and effete in the lapse of time, for its vigor is increased, not diminished, by age; still a relic of the past, about which is gathered a wealth of association, which of itself excites affection and veneration. It is an heirloom of the human family, which, coming into our possession, reminds us of those who held it before us; bringing down to us the wonderful scenes through which it has passed, and by its silent presence and tradition testifying of things and of men that are gone. I speak not now of this Holy Book as inspired of God; not of the glory of its revelations, nor the sublimity of its doctrines, nor the purity of its precepts, nor the sweetness of its consolations, nor the blessedness of its salvation. I refer you not to the history, the poetry, the beauty, the wisdom, or the power of its contents, but to those historic, domestic, and personal associations, which by this time are connected with the very *exterior* of the Bible, and which, like the halo which old pictures represent around whatever is divine, are in aid of the impression which the

divinity of the book is adapted to produce. We cannot but think that this is one of the many advantages attendant upon that *form* of revelation which God has chosen, above every other, especially oral communication. Here is a *book*, printed and bound, like any other book; a visible, tangible, portable object—to be given, to be sent, to be preserved, to be owned, to be bequeathed, unlike a vision or a voice from heaven, however bright, however distinct, fading straightway into darkness and silence; a permanent object, about which are collected the most sacred associations of our nature. And if God's wisdom is displayed in this selection, ours surely should not be wanting in due regard to those exterior associations with the Bible, which form no small part of the power which it exerts upon our minds and characters.

There is a principle of our nature thus appealed to, often abused we allow, which never should be disregarded. The friar in Papal countries, about to eulogize a particular saint, begins by exhibiting to his audience a lock of hair once belonging to the man who is the subject of his panegyric. The churches of the old world are full of these pretended relics, and pride themselves more in their possession than in their altars and pulpits; and if you could divest yourself of historic doubt, if the character of the pretensions were not so absurd and impracticable as to make you incredulous even to scorn, you would certainly admit, in your own experience, that there was a power in such objects to awaken profoundest thoughts and emotions, through the aid of association. It is into no domain of credulity, of romance, or of superstition, that we enter, when adverting to the associations which are connected with the sacred *Word of God.*

One of the most obvious of these is borrowed from the domestic history of those who read it. Associations were formed in your mind, with the book of God, long before you were able to read it for yourself. It was a prominent object in your father's dwelling. It was treated with reverence, as if it were the palladium of the house. You remember the shelf on which it lay, or the stand which it occupied by itself, with no company save some volume of sacred song. It contained the record of the day when you were born, and the day when death visited your family circle. And now, as you look upon it, the past comes back with all its power to cheer you in duty if you are right, to recall and warn you if you have gone astray. The scene is before you in its freshness, as every day that sacred book was read

with prayer. A whole household collected together, children ranged along on either side in lessening size, and your father reading out of that volume which you had always regarded with such veneration. You recall the day when some strange affliction befell your household. You could not comprehend it. You knew not yet what was meant by death; but those who were older than you were in tears, and the family were gathered together, and the book of God was brought forth, and your father read from it, as well as he might, through falling tears. Soon your own mind began to catch the sounds which were uttered, and forthwith to weave in your own thoughts with the mystic words which were read. You remember a certain sabbath night, when the reading was going on, the damp wood upon the hearth was sighing and sizzling, as if something of life was there, and your mind was started off to unwind the meaning of those awful words—the "worm which dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched"—or again, when you looked out into the cold, dark night, and you thought of a soul shut out from the kingdom of God, with all its brightness and warmth, and you could not refrain from tears; for you felt that this sacred book was in some way connected with your eternal destiny. Years elapsed, and strange changes occurred—your venerable father died—you remember that during his last illness there was nothing which he so much desired as to have his children read to him, out of the Bible; and among his latest counsels was this, that you should read it and love it. He sleeps in some grave yard, but upon the stone which marks the spot, there is graven some verse, out of that volume, which was his solace and delight when living. You have seen your mother, in widowhood, resorting to the same book for the best comfort she knew—and when her eyes were too dim to read anything beside, reading this, to the last, as something from which she could not be separated. Follow the several members of your household—one dies here, and another there; but the last words which ever they uttered may have been of such a character as to cast new importance on the Bible. It may be that, dying in its hopes, they made use of some of its joyful promises; or, alas! upbraided themselves for their neglect of the Word of God. Look now upon it. Is it the same to you as any other book? I do not ask you whether you have full faith, after personal investigation, in all its contents, but are there no associations with its very *exterior*, which have an amazing power over you? Are not these designed,

like the tendrils of the vine, to attach you to a personal belief and living understanding of the inspired contents of this volume? See what a power there was, in such associations, in the case of Burns, the author of the Cotter's Saturday Night, in the midst of all his dissipation; and you may as well untie your heartstrings, and unweave your whole intellectual and social life, as disregard all the memories which are associated with the book of God.

Or the associations of which I speak may be of a more personal and private character, even with the individuals who once owned and read the copy which is now in your possession. Perhaps it was given to you by a parent, on your birthday, or at New Year; or on the day when you were leaving home, for school, or for the city. It contains your name, and it may be some expression of love, as kind as an angel could breathe, in the handwriting of the father or the mother whose love for you was next in strength to the love of your God and Saviour. You remember the request which was made, that you would read it—the promise that you should never be forgotten in affection and in prayer; and your regard to or neglect of that request you have felt was the turning point of your destiny.

Years ago, a boy entered the counting room of an eminent merchant in this city, and asked for employment. He was told that no vacancy existed at the time, and was about to withdraw, greatly disappointed. Happening to mention that he had a letter of commendation from Mr. ——, the merchant requested to see it, remarking that he had the greatest regard for that person. The boy fell upon his knees, to unstrap the little valise which he carried in his hand, to find the letter. Taking out, in search of it, one and another of the little articles which maternal love had neatly provided for his use and comfort, a small volume fell out, which caught the eye of the merchant, who was looking on. "What is this?" said he. Oh, "that is my Bible," replied the boy. "And do you read it?" "Always," said he, in artless simplicity—"and when I left home, I promised my mother that I would read two chapters in it every day." The mention of his mother, the thought of his separation from her, and his own disappointment, brought a glistening tear to the boy's eye, which as quickly, by untold sympathy, infected the stern nature of the man who was bending over him. "Well," said the merchant, "I will take you into my employ." And never from that time did he have occasion to distrust the integrity of the boy whom he then received,

and who himself then began a career which ended in affluence and honor. Do you think it strange, that when he became a man, he should cherish with peculiar regard the identical volume with which was associated all his success in the world?

Or the copy now in your possession was once the property of some esteemed friend, who has now gone from the earth. It may be a memorial, sent to you from his sick chamber, with some kind message, intended to turn your thoughts to its more frequent perusal; or, accidentally, as we say, it has fallen into your hand, when laid aside by him who needs it no more. Casting your eye along its pages, you perceive that many of its verses have been marked by its former owner. Forthwith you begin to imagine what must have been the reflections which these verses excited, at the time they were thus designated as matters of special interest. The eye which now is closed in death once glanced along these very characters. Here is a place where it rested with a special attention; perhaps a tear of penitence fell upon this very page, and here a ray of joy was kindled in the eye which is now rayless forever. Here are promises which were of great comfort during a long illness and the weariness of a sick room. It is not necessary for me to ask whether they are illusion or truth; the fact is, they were regarded as substantial truth by the individual who read them, and were an actual support to him in life and in death. In the faith of these he died. Do they not address me, therefore, with a special force? Whither has the spirit departed? With what emotions does he now look back to those very thoughts and dispositions which were nurtured by the Bible? What is eternity? What is death? How near may the departed spirit be to me, the moment that I now read? I look upon a blind person, and perceive that by the loss of a single sense he is shut out from all perception of surrounding objects; or a deaf person, who by the loss of one faculty is ever after insensible to the sounds so distinct to all others. And I am startled to think how near the realities of the spiritual world may be to me; just as near as the sights and sounds of this world are to the blind and deaf, and yet I do not now perceive them, for want of the proper faculty. But shall I infer that those objects do not exist, and that other beings are incapable of perceiving them, and holding intercourse with them? Is there not in fact an intercourse, through memory, and through love, of our souls, with the departed? We know that it would have given them

pleasure, could they have anticipated, that when we look into the volume which was once theirs, and upon the passages which once conveyed special instruction to them, our remembrance of them would "infuse a more touching significance" into these very words—thus "retaining them, though invisibly, and without their actual presence, in the exercise of a beneficent influence." * Is it nothing to us, when our eye rests on the copy of the Bible, in aid of its effectual impression, that memory recalls the friend with whom it is associated, and imagination apprehends him, when now, under a mightier manifestation of truth, as still animated with a spirit which would, if that were consistent with the laws of the higher economy, convey to me yet again the same testimony and injunctions? Is all influential relation dissolved by the withdrawment from mutual intercourse; so that let my friends die, and I am as loose of their hold upon me as if they had ceased to exist, or never had existed? The supposition is inadmissible. The voice of many a departed friend seems to address us, from the very *exterior* of the Bible, not to slight the truths which are so sacredly associated with their memory.

And from these personal recollections, the mind glances to associations yet more general. The *history* of the Bible is associated with every mention of its divine claims. It has not been monopolized by a few individuals or families. It has had a long and eventful history. No book has been so often translated, into so many languages, and of none have so many impressions been made. Its home has been the world. It has been domesticated in the distant East, and travelled on the wave of life to the West. What untold millions of the human race have seen it, and handled it, and been more or less affected by it. We cannot divest ourselves of the remembrance of the multitudes who have believed it. What we have seen it accomplish in our domestic observation, that we know it has accomplished in the case of millions beside. We have heard, we have read of thousands, who valued it beyond gold, who lived in its light, and died in its hope. It bears with it the testimony of ten thousand times ten thousand. Whenever we think of it, we think of the great muster roll of the saints, in all ages, and in all lands. It is perfumed by the fragrance of their piety. It is illuminated by the glory of their ascension. It is borne down into our hands along with

* John Foster.

the accumulated memories of the world, and associated with the experience of the multitudes, whom no man can number in heaven, whose testimony in its advocacy is as the sound of many waters.

The very sight of it recalls the forms of those who were reputed to be its authors. Never before did such a conclave of worthies people the halls of our imagination. Never did such sanctity and awe surround the legislators and heroes of the world, as invest the names of those who are associated with the authorship of the Bible. Moses is before us, the shepherd amid the sublime solitudes of Horeb, and the deliverer of a nation out of bondage; admitted to an audience with God on the curtained top of Sinai, the leader of a host in march, in battle, in worship, and in peace; and at length, disappearing from human view, after the vision from the summit of Nebo—uniting in his person the qualities of legislator, soldier, historian, poet, beyond any other the world has seen. And Samuel passes along in the train, in whose ear at midnight, when yet a child, the voice of God was heard, startling the silence of the night, the stern old judge, the anointer of kings, the awe-struck seer. David follows on, now a stripling, working deliverance for his country's armies, from the host of the Philistines, challenging a mighty giant to mortal combat, and bringing back, he a ruddy boy, the huge head of the fallen foe; now a king in Zion, the leader of the worshippers in those jubilant songs which filled the courts of the temple, and now waking the echoes of the night, in the composition of those odes which were designed to be universal and immortal. And his youthful son is not forgotten. With wisdom when a youth surpassing the oldest sage, enthroned amid wealth and glory such as imagination never had conceived, recording in sententious form that knowledge which his own experience had discovered. And Isaiah, and Jeremy, and Daniel, and all the choir of the prophets—robed in mystery, yet luminous with awful sanctity—uttering the deep things of God, and from the high places, to which they were led, announcing to the world beneath the events of future and distant ages. Then there breaks upon our view the company of the apostles, the reputed authors of the later portions of the book. We stop not to decide, or even to inquire, whether indeed they were moved by the Holy Ghost to write what was ascribed to their authorship, for our minds are filled with the remembrance of their tragic deaths, as gathered from history, which imparts a sort of fascination to the words which are said

to have proceeded from their pens. Matthew suffering martyrdom in Ethiopia—Mark in Egypt—John exiled by Domitian—James precipitated from the temple at Jerusalem—Peter requesting to be crucified with his head downwards—and Paul beheaded in Nero's reign at Rome, flinching not from danger, doing all things, daring all things, and giving the best and mightiest confirmation of what they wrote, by a cheerful martyrdom. All these associations are in advance of any scrutiny of their several arguments, and surround the Scriptures themselves with a power of impression from which it is difficult, if not impossible, to divest ourselves.

Then there sweeps before our vision the great army of the martyrs, whose attachment to this book was stronger than the love of life. It was with them in the cells where they were imprisoned. They carried it in their bosoms, and next to their hearts, when on their way to the scaffold. It kindled up that strange gladness which outshone the flames which consumed them, and inspired them with that heroism which incites and captivates us without our choice. Nor can we forget the efforts which have been made to exterminate this book from the earth. Kings have leagued together to destroy it. They have ransacked the dwellings of those who had been suspected of possessing it. The world has been convulsed with wars and battles over and around this single volume. But, lo! it has emerged from them all, like a veteran unscarred from a thousand fields, and laden with the spoils of its bloodless victories. What conquests has it won, over those who have ridiculed, and argued, and despised, and hated, and attacked it. Men of all climes have been proud to do it homage. The Littletons and the Rochesters, who once made it the theme of profane wit, came at length to receive it with faith and gladness. What testimonies to its truth were extorted from the Rousseaus and Voltaires, whose life-long opposition had left it unharmed. Calm and uninjured, it emerges from the floods which have swept over it, the fires which have been kindled upon it, and the blood which has flowed around it, and passes into our hands, with all these glorious recollections of its history,

"The milk-white hind, immortal and unchanged."

Then, again, we remember that it is associated with the best minds and with the best men of whom our species can boast. The golden-mouthed Chrysostom preached from it at Antioch and Constantinople; so did Ambrose at Milan; Gregory Nazianzen; and Jerome, at

Rome. The eloquence of Massillon was inspired by it, and the sublime genius of Pascal fed upon it. It is the very book out of which the daughters of Milton read to the blind old prophet, and by whose inspiration he was borne up,

"Above the Aonian Mount,"
—— "to the height of his great argument."

It was with Bunyan in jail at Bedford, and suggested and informed that wonderful allegory which for its inventive genius will ever be held the second uninspired book in our language. It was the very book which Newton studied more than he studied those other Scriptures, the stars of heaven; which Bacon and Boyle and Locke believed with unfaltering faith. Raphael and Guido and Rubens drew from it the inspiration of their art. The ripest scholars of the world have passed their lives in unfolding its import. It was eulogized by Sir William Jones, Sir Matthew Hale, and Sir Samuel Romilly. The gravest judges, the wisest legislators, have honored it, and it spreads itself out, and rolls down, like another Pactolus, with its sands of gold, through all forms and departments of literature, informing our language, tinging our books, and leaving its impression on everything which it touches.

Nor can we forget that this very volume, whatever are its contents and its claims, is historically related to all the great movements and reforms of the world, especially with all the advances of civil and religious liberty. It is the good old book which Wickliffe studied in the cloisters of Merton College; out of which John Huss preached so eloquently in Bethlehem chapel, at Prague. It is the book which was the sole armory of Luther, and with which, like a lever, he pried up fifty millions of people to liberty of thought and life. The very same which Calvin and Beza and Melancthon, and their accomplished coadjutors in France and Switzerland, employed in the revival of letters and the reformation of religion. It was this from which John Knox thundered out his denunciations of despotism, from the windows of the Canongate. This is associated with the martyrdom of Cranmer and Ridley, at Oxford. It is this very book, a part of which Alfred the Great translated into the English tongue, and in which he found the seeds of all good and wise culture—the book from which patriotism and liberty have drawn all their inspiration. Here was it that Algernon Sidney found his best arguments in defence of what he called on the

scaffold, "the good old cause." It lay beneath the head of Argyle, when sleeping in his cell the sweet sleep of infancy, within an hour of his execution. It was quilted into the doublet of John Hampden, and saturated with his blood, when, throwing his arms around the neck of his faithful horse, he was borne from the battle-field to die. "Sire," said Lady Rachel Russell to Charles II, "I shall never forgive myself for having knelt to your Majesty. My noble husband is too good a man to live in your Majesty's domains. I will hasten to the tower and prepare him for the kingdom of God;" and this was the book out of which that heroic woman read to her husband, the night before he was beheaded. It was out of this that Cromwell read aloud, at the head of his troops, before the battle of Naseby. It came over in the Mayflower. The first compact of constitutional liberty in that ship was written upon its cover. It had a place in every cabin which our fathers reared in the wilderness. The soldiers of the revolution carried it in their knapsacks. The First Congress of the United States took measures to increase its circulation. It was the book on which Washington laid his honest hand when taking his solemn oath of office. It lies in every court of justice, to secure the sanctity of oaths; and to-day, a whole nation is instructed in its precepts.

And all these associations are connected with the mere *exterior* of the Bible. They are distinct from all faith in the origin and authority of its contents. They are the light which flickers about the very covers of this wonderful book—a light like the luminous atmosphere which, according to mythology, encircles whatever is celestial. And you will observe that the associations of which I have spoken are not superstitions or prejudices, but the offspring of historical realities. They are the shadows of actual facts; and though they are external and incidental, yet are they as real to us as any matters which belong to our existence. The Bible is not to us the same as any other book. There is no other book with which are connected such memories and such varied associations. Say that these associations do not amount to a demonstration of the truth of the Bible. We admit it, but they exist; there is power in them. They enter into the very structure of our minds and hearts. We cannot divest ourselves of them. They were designed to aid the impression of all which the Bible contains. They are prepossessions in favor of its authority. They are feelings which prepare us to listen to its oracular voices.

Much has been written, in our days, as to the desirableness of a *new* translation of the Scriptures. After all which has been said of the changes of words, after all admissions as to the result of severe criticisms, we confess ourselves impatient of all proposals for what may be called a *new* version of the Bible. We like not this modernizing of what is ancient—this association of the *new* with what is old and venerable, and which, in these our times, cannot be changed without disturbing the landmarks of centuries, the very standard and anchorage of our language. We should as soon think of changing the portraits of our ancestors, putting them into a modern dress, or cutting down the old oaks about the homestead, and substituting poplars and willows. And we trust, for reasons not at all allied to superstition or defective scholarship, that the light of the last day may shine on the very book which to-day, wherever the English tongue is spoken, reflects the light of God, in our homes and in our churches.

And now, with minds crowded with these lively and affectionate memories—these manifold associations by which the Bible connects itself with our personal history, and with everything good, and great, and hopeful, in the history of the world—we open its pages, and examine its contents; and here we find the secret of all that power which is inseparable from the sacred volume. It is the Word of God. It is a gift of light from the glory of the throne, to guide the lost, and relieve the perplexities of the human soul. It contains the legislation of the Most High for the universe. It promulgates a law, addressed to the *heart* of every man. It reveals the only way in which apostate men may be reclaimed, the life of God in their souls be rekindled, and, conscious of guilt as they are, may be saved. Proceeding from God, it is *truth;* and herein lies its essential power—its unmixed and everlasting truth. The words which God has spoken are spirit and life. As a fire and as a hammer are they, to break the rock in pieces. There is no power like that which divine truth is capable of exerting on the mind and heart of man. The great forces of nature, fire and frost, lightning and earthquake, are but analogies to illustrate that greater power which the Word of God has exerted, and will exert, upon the human soul. Enforced by the Holy Spirit, it becomes the exceeding greatness of God's power. It accomplishes an entire conversion in the interior dispositions of the individual man, according to the working of the mighty power of God, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him

from the dead. And the change which it works in the individual is the pledge and promise of the changes it will work in the world. There is no abuse which can outlive its power—no mountains of ice that can stand before its heat. It *is* the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation. Slowly and gradually, it may make its way in time to come, as in time past. But the spirit of God is in the wheels. There is no going back to the sun and the seasons. The year is brought about, and the harvests will be ripened and gathered. The roots of the great tree, in which the fowls of heaven build their nests and sing, strike deeper, and spread themselves out wider, feeling about the foundations of vast evils, working into every little crevice, and growing slowly and silently, loosening the foundation stones, and overturning them at last, as by the secret power of God. Nor is there one good to be desired for man, whether for this life or the life to come, which follows not in the train of that book, which contains the wisdom, the truth, and the love, of God.

Two things, therefore, primarily should engage our attention. First of all, receive the Word of God yourself, in a manner becoming its authorship—not as the word of man, but as it is, in truth, the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. Disregard not those memories which have been graven into your heart, and break not away from those unnumbered associations by which the God of the Bible would draw you to a personal faith in its inspired contents. Think how those recollections will haunt you, exasperating the stings of remorse, if you should despise what God has written, and, with the light so clear, and the voice of God so distinct, you should perish through neglect of that which was designed to save you. Honor the Word of God. Love it. Believe it. Search it. Bind it to your heart. Let it dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Live by its light, and let your head be pillowed upon its supports when you are called to die.

What is of value to you, impart to others. *Show* your value of the Bible by your disposition to distribute it. Flame is not extinguished by kindling another. Who can frame an objection to the universal circulation of the Word of God? It is the cheapest, surest, and most compendious mode of accomplishing every good, and remedying every evil, which ever came within the desires or notice of philanthropy and piety. It is the inspiration of liberty, the fountain of knowledge, the stability of justice, the cement of society, the reform of mischief, the

impulse to progress, the restraint from excess, the focus of all light and love, the solution of doubt, the remedy for sin, the source of hope, the security of the soul, and the written charter of heavenly citizenship. Give it, then, to all who will receive it; and when the history of life shall be unwound, in the day of Revelation, it may be disclosed what the book which goes forth as your gift shall accomplish in the world. Perhaps it goes into some school-house in a distant settlement, and there trains a group of children in their nobility and duty as citizens. Perhaps it goes into some prison, and there inspires the last hope that God does not forsake even the most guilty; or to some alms-house, to comfort some sick and aged victim of want with the thought of his father's house, with bread enough and to spare; or to the forecastle of some ship, to preach to the mariner amid the solitude of the seas; or into the hands of the immigrant—the first gift which Christian freedom dispenses, at the entering in of the gates; or it crosses the ocean, and, within a few weeks, the missionary will distribute its varied translations in Constantinople, in Ceylon, in Canton, in Africa, and in all the islands of the sea. And long after you are dead, immortal minds will be weaving around this very volume those memories and associations which now encircle your own Bible, investing them with sanctity, with love, and with power—minds which, sanctified by truth and saved by grace, you will meet hereafter, amid the glories of your Father's Kingdom.

Thomas DeWitt

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE IN COMMITTING HIS SOUL INTO THE HANDS OF THE REDEEMER.

BY REV. THOMAS DE WITT, D. D.,

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I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.—1 *Timothy*, ii, 12.

This second Epistle of Paul to Timothy, his son in the faith and service of Christ, and in the ministry of the Gospel, was written near the close of his life, when he was in prison at Rome, and waiting for his martyrdom. In the fourth and last chapter of this Epistle, he writes: "*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*" Then, in the review of his Christian and ministerial course, he adds, "*I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.*" In the prospect of approaching death and eternity, he says, "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.*" Thus standing on the verge of eternity, he realizes the fulfilment of the declaration which, years before, he addressed to the elders at Ephesus: "*None of these things move, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and fulfil the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The character of Paul unfolds itself brightly from the time of his conversion, in the memorable circumstances connected with it, until his death. After his conversion, "he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision," and went forth "*to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them who are sanctified.*"

He possessed in constant exercise an intellect highly gifted and disciplined, combined with a heart of enlarged, warm, and pure affec-

tions. He was in "labors more abundant," prosecuted without relaxation, and amid opposition and sufferings unto death. The principle which animated and sustained him was an enlightened and firm faith in the truths which he embraced and preached, and an unwavering and firm reliance on the Saviour as the object of his faith. In the beginning of the Epistle, Paul exhorts Timothy with regard to the duties devolving upon him in the ministry to which he had been called, and connects therewith an allusion to his own ministry: "*Whereunto I am appointed, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles, for which cause I suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.*"

The knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of His ability to save unto the uttermost, are principles which belong to all the faithful followers of Christ, and which it is their privilege and duty carefully to cherish and cultivate. They are principles which will support them under every trial, and invigorate them for the discharge of every duty. The views which Paul here expresses are common to the household of faith, and enter into the whole of their Christian life and warfare.

The form of the expressions in the text is somewhat remarkable, and deserves attention. The Apostle says, "WHOM I have believed," without specifying the person. But this gives greater emphasis, as the mind naturally and strongly adverts to the only object of the Christian's faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "THAT I have committed to Him," without specifying it. At once it is determined to be the soul, in its everlasting interests. He says, "THAT day," without designating it. The day of judgment, with subsequent eternity, is immediately defined as infinitely transcendent in importance. "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in THAT day," is the prayer of Paul for his friend Onesiphorus.

We propose to consider, in view of the words of the text—

I. THE ACT OF THE SINNER IN COMMITTING HIS SOUL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

II. THE PERSUASION WHICH THE BELIEVER CHERISHES OF THE SAFETY OF THE EVERLASTING INTERESTS OF HIS SOUL IN THE HANDS OF THE REDEEMER.

I. *The act of the sinner in committing his soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

When the sinner deposits his immortal soul into the hands of the Redeemer, he must entertain a proper estimate of its nature and value. This is our immaterial and immortal nature endowed with the high capacity of knowing, loving, serving, and enjoying God. This is the distinguishing characteristic of man, that he was made in the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Though sin has defaced this image, and despoiled man of spiritual life and moral beauty, and impaired his intellectual vigor, still he retains the remains of his former grandeur, like a palace in ruins. There is no thought so strongly impressive and affecting, as that, in its endless existence, it is the heir of endless happiness or misery. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever." Yet how thoughtless and regardless are the great mass of mankind as to their souls, the relations they sustain to God, and the results of death and opening eternity. "They are of the earth, earthy." They look to things seen and temporal, and walk in the light of their own eyes, and after the desires of their own heart." Remaining in this state, they feel no need of deliverance from the power and effects of sin, and will make light of, and neglect, and refuse, the purchased and proffered salvation of the Redeemer. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Hence the sinner, in coming to Christ, and committing his soul into His hands, must exercise that "godly sorrow which works repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of." This is not that "sorrow of the world which worketh death," in the mere remorse of conscience under the terrors of the law, in the fear of deserved wrath, or the distress generated by the disappointments and trials of life. But it is a sorrow produced by the renewed principle of love planted in the soul by the Holy Spirit, and exercised in the light of divine truth, strictly applied. The law of God, which he approves as "holy, just, and good, which was ordained to life, he finds to be unto death." By the law, he gains the knowledge of sin. He becomes deeply and thoroughly convinced of the guilt and pollution of sin, which reigns within and over him. He experiences that it is an *evil* as well as bitter thing, that he has forsaken the fountain of living water, and "hewn out to himself broken cisterns that can hold no water." He realizes his desert, and apprehends the

peril of his inheritance of everlasting woe. It is not so much to the outward acts and effects of sin that his mind is exercised, and his heart impressed, as to the inward motives, principles, and affections, of his soul, and he traces all the streams to the fountain within. It is in reference to the God of infinite holiness and goodness, as well as majesty, and in view of His holy and perfect law, the fulfilment of which is love, and also of all the relations He sustains to us, and the claims He holds over us, that true conviction and penitence are induced and exercised. Thus the psalmist, in the penitential fifty-first psalm, confesses, "*Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest.*" With this confession are united two prayers, distinctly referring to the two great blessings comprised in the sinner's salvation, as exhibited in the Gospel, justification and sanctification. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." "Create within me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit." Under these convictions, the sinner earnestly institutes the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" He finds in himself neither righteousness nor strength. He can present before God nothing but guilt and spiritual helplessness. Paul relates his own experience in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans: "*I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" Ignorant of the spirituality and strictness of the law of God, he was alive in the pride of his self-righteousness and his presumed safety. But when the commandment (which says, "thou shalt not covet") came, sin revived. The law of God, searching and trying his inward spirit, and discovering his secret thoughts, motives, and affections, as the springs of action, and shedding light upon the retrospect of the past, slew the pride of his fallen nature. "Sin revived;" he saw and felt the working of it within his soul, and traced the fruits of it in his life. He then died as to his legal hopes and self-confidence, and became an humble and fervent suppliant for pardoning mercy and saving grace. Men, in their natural state, are characterized as "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and, going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." But when the light of divine truth enters the soul, and the Word, quick and powerful, becomes a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, the selfish ease and confidence of

the sinner departs, his legal confidence gives way, and, instead of taking the attitude and indulging in the boasting of the Pharisee, he, like the publican, with downcast eye and deeply-sorrowful spirit, utters, in the fullness of his soul, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Under deep conviction of sin, the sinner is often long embarrassed with vain endeavors, in some form and manner of self-righteousness, to prepare himself for the reception of mercy. He finds himself insidiously betrayed into legal strivings, which prevent him from a ready and cordial acceptance of the free and unrestricted offers and invitations of the Gospel. A strong sense of guilt and of depravity and spiritual impotence for a time keep back from the Saviour, instead of leading at once to Him, as "able to save unto the uttermost." At last, forsaking every other refuge, and renouncing all attempts at preparing himself by any labor or exercise of his own to obtain the favor of God through Christ, he accepts the free gift of God, "without money and without price;" and in that acceptance he makes an entire surrender of himself, to be made "the temple of the Holy Ghost." He cordially adopts the sentiment—

"Should my tears forever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know,
This for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.
In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

Now he looks to the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, and finds "peace in believing."

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

In committing the soul into the hands of the Redeemer, there is a believing contemplation and reliance on the Saviour, in view of his designation in the everlasting covenant of peace to accomplish the work of redemption, as the Mediator and surety of His people, of His personal and official qualifications, as "Immanuel, God with us," of the offices which He executes, the relations in which He stands to sinners, and of the free invitation and exceeding great and precious promises recorded in His Word. There is a passage in the

forty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, to which Paul has reference in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, which is beautifully expressive on this point: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone forth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against them shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." How luminous, instructive, and attractive, in the light of the Gospel, are the invitations and promises in the beginning of the fifty-fifth chapter of the same prophet Isaiah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David."

The promises interwoven with the invitations of the Word of God are said to be in "Christ Jesus YEA and AMEN," true and faithful. They are founded upon the finished redeeming work of Christ, in which the Father is well pleased, and which is the pledge of all blessings, the fruit of His purchase, and the gift of His grace. It is in the covenant, confirmed, and ratified in the death of Christ, that the sinner, by faith, seeks his refuge, and now "joins himself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten." He now "first gives himself to the Lord, and then to us," the church. Of this covenant, the royal psalmist at the close of life, commemorating the vicissitudes of his pilgrimage, says, "Yet the Lord has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

The expressions in the two clauses of the text are of the same import. In the first clause the apostle says, "I know whom I have BELIEVED." In the second, he says, "He will keep what I have COMMITTED to Him." *Committing* the soul into the hands of the Saviour, and *believing* on Him, are therefore identical in import. In

the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we read, "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name." Faith, receiving the Saviour in all His saving works and offices, able to save unto the uttermost, commits the interests of the undying precious soul, in all circumstances, in time and for eternity, into His hands, with unwavering and cordial confidence. Faith, as justifying and saving, is simply accrediting the testimony which God has given concerning His Son, and receiving Him, in His whole character, work, and benefits, as He is therein offered. "He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "By grace are ye saved, through faith." Faith renounces all of self, finding nothing therein but guilt and pollution, magnifies and trusts the freeness and riches of divine grace, and accepts and embraces Christ, as the unspeakable gift of God. This faith, humbling the sinner and exalting the Saviour, comprises in its operation the elements of the new spiritual life, and so "works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world." It receives Christ, and then yields all to Him, in love and obedience. Faith, receiving Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness," is prior, in the time and order of evangelical exercise, to its rendering dedication to the service of Christ. These two exercises, connected as they ever are, are distinct in their nature, as well as order. The one looks to Christ as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, is the act of a condemned sinner receiving pardon, and restored to favor; the other is the act of the sinner, quickened and restored to spiritual life, yielding his homage of love and obedience to Him "who loved him, and gave Himself for him," in dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit. The doctrines of justification and sanctification are the two grand pillars of evangelical truth, standing side by side, inseparable in the positions they occupy, yielding mutual influence, yet never to be blended and confounded. Faith, receiving Christ, and committing the soul into His hands, owns Him as a complete Saviour; as "all in all;" as *Prophet*, to receive all his instructions; as *Priest*, to rest entirely and continually on His atoning sacrifice and prevailing intercession; and as *King*, to yield submissively and obediently to His rule and government, in providence and grace. The surrender to Christ, when received by faith, connects time with eternity, respects, in their appropriate and sure combination, pardon and holiness, grace and glory.

When the sinner comes to Christ, resting on his finished redemption, and pleading the promises, and so finds peace in believing, he can join in the words—

"Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,
Welcome to this heart of mine.
Lord, I make a full surrender,
Ev'ry power and thought be Thine;
Thine entirely,
Through eternal ages Thine."

II. *The persuasion which the believer cherishes of the everlasting interests of his soul in the hands of His Redeemer.*

It is a persuasion *founded upon right knowledge.* It is a belief of the truth in the light of which the knowledge to which the apostle alludes, and the persuasion which he entertains, are formed and cultivated. Persuasion is the gentle and strong influence of the truth, convincing the mind, moulding the affections, and subduing the will. The persuasion of which the apostle speaks is therefore one formed and regulated by the truth, and enlightened in its nature. It is not the effect of blind impulse, of assumed visions and revelations, or of any direct impressions on the soul, without the constant and careful test of divine truth. The apostle, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness WITH our spirits, that we are the children of God," &c., and not *to* or *upon* our spirits. He exhibits in the context, in an instructive and rich discussion, the fruits of the operation of the Spirit in believers; and thus the Spirit bears its witness, by shining on His own work in the soul, mortifying its corruptions, and quickening and nourishing its holy affections through the truth. Hence an accurate acquaintance with the truth, carefully and constantly studied, treasured up and applied, is necessary to the formation, preservation, and establishment, of the *persuasion* or assurance spoken of. In the knowledge of the state, character, and prospects, of ourselves, as sinners, derived from the clear and faithfully-applied knowledge of divine truth, will spring forth, in increasing tenderness and power, that "repentance which is unto salvation." In the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His mediatorial character and work, in His glory and grace, will be called forth that faith which secures and embraces salvation, and which is the vital and controlling element

of the Christian life. In the knowledge of the delineation of the beauty of holiness in all its range and fullness, exhibited in the Divine Word, and urged by all claims and motives pressed upon the soul by the love of Christ, who died that we should live, ardent desires and strenuous efforts to follow after peace and holiness, in the footsteps of Christ, will be induced. All these fitly coalescing, the soul will sweetly and firmly rest in this persuasion. The apostle prays in behalf of the Ephesian believers, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance." He prays in behalf of the Philippian believers, "This I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." For himself he says, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." This persuasion is the result of spiritual illumination, as the Spirit opens the eyes of the understanding "to behold wondrous things out of the law of God." It is calmly formed, because it is enlightened.

This persuasion rests upon the testimony of the God of infinite veracity and faithfulness. "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son," says the apostle John. God has given the record sure and imperishable in His own inspired Word of Truth and Grace, and this record testifies of the gift of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. It is the testimony of this record alone which can solve the questions which have ever perplexed and baffled the loftiest exercise of human reason, which affect God, man, sin, death, salvation, the results in eternity. Without the light of this testimony, men remain in the shadow of death, wandering in devious paths, in the broad way to destruction. But where the record is unfolded, life and immortality are brought to light. It is given by inspiration, and stamped with the seal of His divine covenant faithfulness. Here nothing but the testimony of God can avail and satisfy; and here, in the record he has given us, it is found in all its clearness, sufficiency, and practical adaptation. If in temporal matters we confide our interests into the hands of our fellow men of tried honesty, clear judgment, and practical wisdom, with quietness, shall we not, in the higher interests of our souls, believing the record of His truth, in firm confidence appropriate His tried Word and faithful promises, and commit our souls into the

hands of the crucified but now exalted Redeemer? In this record we have the matter attested—"eternal life which is in Christ, and the testimony of God concerning it." Both are needed as a basis for the persuasion of the Christian, viz: a divine testimony, authoritative, sure, and satisfying, and the matter attested of inestimable value, and suited to man's wants and interests in eternal life. The apostle, in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, writes, bearing upon this point, "God, willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The truths in this record are the opened Scriptures, because written on the tablets of the hearts of Christ's children by the Holy Spirit. There grows a strict correspondence between the experience of the soul, and the teachings of divine truth which it receives. The believer thus "sets to his seal that God is true," and "has the witness in himself." Herein is found a ground of his full persuasion.

In the progress of the Christian life, the believer rests his persuasion and confidence on the same grounds on which he at first, at conversion, committed his soul into the hands of the Redeemer. At every stage of his course, he must be "looking unto Jesus." "As he has received the Lord Jesus Christ, so he must walk in Him." His experience and language are, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

In proportion to the clearness and directness of the views which the believer entertains of the glory and grace of the Saviour, as revealed in His Word, will be the stability of his faith and the sweetness of his assurance. We are prone to seek within and from ourselves some ground of confidence in our approach to the Saviour, substituting our exercises and experience in the place of the finished work of Christ, and the work of the Spirit forming in us "Christ the hope of glory." Our exercises vary through the sympathy existing between body and soul, and in the decays and fluctuations incident to the spiritual life. Corresponding with these fluctuations will be those of the light, peace, and spiritual strength, arising from the right and vigorous operation of that faith which receives and

exalts Christ, and ever draws out of the fullness of His grace. The native pride of our hearts is insidiously seeking to find what may be termed an *evangelical* righteousness of our own, instead of directly appropriating the righteousness of Christ. All that the Christian learns from the study of his own heart, and the dealings of the Lord reviewed, should lead him to a more simple and entire trust in the Saviour, in the reception of all His grace. It deserves to be remarked, that the apostle does *not* say, "I know THAT I have believed," but "WHOM I have believed." It is our knowledge of our confidence and love to the Saviour that defines and characterizes our spiritual state. In all circumstances of trials without and conflicts within, it is equally our privilege and duty to go to the Saviour by "the new and living way which He has opened and consecrated," and, pleading the promises with a childlike freedom and boldness, "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

It is incumbent on Christians to treasure up the memory of their experience of the wisdom, loving kindness, power, and faithfulness of God, in their heavenly pilgrimage. "Thou shalt remember all the ways in which the Lord thy God hath led thee." The use of Christian experience, in the review of it, is not to make it a ground of confidence or source of comfort in itself, but to view it as a proof and confirmation of the Divine Word, and thus to derive therefrom encouragement to trust in it with firmer and more unreserved confidence. Paul says, in the first chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, referring to past deliverances, "Who delivered from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver." The review of the past is made subservient to the exercise of trust in the providence and promise of God for the future. In the book of Psalms, which comprises an anatomy of the believing soul in all the phases of its experience, we find continual reference to the past, as an encouragement to trust, hope, and comfort, in the present, and for the future.

In cherishing and cultivating this Christian assurance, while it must rest on Christ as the only and sure foundation, the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to take the things of Christ, and show them to the soul, and who is the great agent in the economy of redemption, in renewing, sanctifying the soul, and training it for eternal life, must be specially honored. He is represented as "sealing us unto the day of redemption," and as "being the earnest of our inheritance." We

are not to grieve this Spirit by failing in dependence upon His needed and promised gracious influences. How striking is the comprehensive and beautiful delineation of the Christian life in the twentieth and twenty-first verses of the Epistle of Jude: "But, ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost; keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The apostle's prayer in behalf of the believers at Rome, whom he addressed, was, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

We are exhorted (Hebrews, x, 22) to draw near with a true heart, in the full ASSURANCE OF FAITH, &c. In the Hebrews, sixth chapter, eleventh verse, we are exhorted "to show the same diligence to the *full assurance of hope* to the end." The assurance of faith and the assurance of hope differ in the same manner as faith and hope themselves differ. Faith accredits the divine testimony, and applies the truth directly and persistently to the soul. In its essential nature and office, it is appropriating. It regards the truth not merely speculatively, with mental approbation, and with vague and indefinite application to mankind at large, but brings the whole soul in individual subjection to it, seeking to receive its instruction and partake its blessings. Hope fastens on the promises, and lays hold on eternal life set forth therein. It is evident that hope and the assurance of hope follow in the order of nature and the process of influence, faith, and the assurance of faith. But the trinity of graces—faith, hope, and charity—work and live and grow together. The true way to gain assurance of hope is to cultivate *precious* faith, growing into assurance. This view, rightly entertained and employed, will animate and strengthen faith, and inspire comfort. This assurance is the privilege and duty of every Christian, presented in promise and precept, and none should fail ardently and diligently to labor for the attainment and enjoyment of it.

The subject teaches us—

1. *The glory of the Redeemer, as the great object of faith.*

"We beheld His glory," says John, "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and of His fullness have we all received grace for grace." His essential glory He had with the Father before the foundation of the world. He became Immanuel, "God manifest in the flesh." His birth was heralded by

the angelic host on the plains of Bethlehem, uttering the song, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men." He passed through His scene and course of humiliation, meeting the contradiction of sinners, working wonders of mercy, and distilling the lessons of wisdom. After the agonies of Gethsemene, and amid the desertion and tortures of the Cross, He gives up the ghost, exclaiming, "It *is finished.*" He brake the bonds of death, rose from the grave, ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and is now exalted on the throne, to give repentance and remission of sins. He is crowned LORD of all, having all power in heaven and on earth, directing and controlling all the events of providence, and head over all things, to save and bless His blood-bought church. Angels adore Him as their Lord. The redeemed in glory exult in the song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who loved us and washed us in His own blood," &c. It is for us dwellers on earth to take our place at the foot of the Cross, and look up to the Lamb of God taking away our sin, and so find peace in believing. He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Feeling the attractions of the Cross, let us look upwards to His throne, whence He dispenses all grace, leading us on to the glory which is to be revealed, becoming more and more assimilated to His image. "We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. We learn *the inestimable value of the sacred Scriptures*, which reveal Christ and His great salvation.

Our Saviour said, in reference to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, then existing, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." "The spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus." The scriptures alone, rendered effectual by the Holy Spirit, "make wise unto salvation, and furnish unto all good works." "In the reading of them," we find "consolation and hope." The matter in the Psalms very impressively unfolds the efficacy, value, and preciousness, of these Scriptures. The hundred and nineteenth Psalm, at great length and in varied forms, expresses the delight of the believing soul in them, and the influence exerted by them. The Word of God should dwell in us richly, hidden in our hearts. Christians fail in making the Word of God the theme of their daily and continued study, carefully, thoroughly pon-

dered and digested, and with prayer strictly applied to their individual cases. Then would they be rooted and grounded in love to Christ, and be built up on their most holy faith. It is said of the man of God, in the first Psalm, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate, day and night." The effect is described. "He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

3. We learn the FREENESS, *as well as* GREATNESS, *of the salvation* which is in Christ Jesus.

It is, by Christ Himself, dearly purchased through His atoning sacrifice; but to the sinner it is the gift of free grace, proffered and bestowed "without money and without price." The invitation at the close of the sacred volume is, "The Spirit and the bride say *come*. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst *come;* and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Jesus declared, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Paul (in Romans, iii, 22) states "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Sinners under conviction are embarrassed, and do not discern and appreciate the entire freeness of the way of access to God on the throne of grace through Christ, because they fail to distinguish between the warrant to believe in Christ, and the views and dispositions requisite to embrace that warrant. The warrant to believe is simply and wholly the free offer of the Gospel, in the freeness and fullness of the blessings of redemption to all who will accept. It is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. His only plea is, I am a sinner; his only claim, Jesus is the Saviour, able to save to the uttermost. The views and dispositions requisite to embrace Christ are alone a deep and just conviction of guilt and sin, an utter renunciation of righteousness of his own, and the refuge of the soul in the controlling desires to the needed, suitable, and all-sufficient salvation in Christ. The convinced and seeking sinner, delivered from his embarrassment, and discovering the new and living way, in the freeness of divine grace, comes to Christ in entireness of cordial dependence, and free and full surrender. His language is—

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
Oh, Lamb of God, I come.

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
Oh, Lamb of God, I come."

How wondrously *great* and *free* is this salvation. "*Come, for all things are ready.*" Well may we exclaim, "How SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION?"

4. We learn that the *doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith, promotes and secures holiness and good* WORKS.

The cavils and objections on this point, which have ever been current in an unbelieving world, were addressed to the apostle in his day. He at once repels them, with strong emphasis and holy indignation. "Do we, then, through faith, make void the law? God forbid. Nay, we establish the law." "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Dr. Owen remarks that the doctrine of divine grace may be perverted and abused by men unacquainted with its living power, but the principle of it in the soul never can. The sinner, when united to Christ by faith, is a new creature, with holy love implanted within him. This love is the fulfilling of the law. It is this which now guides and regulates and controls the motives, affections, and will. When the law was first written on tables of stone, they were placed in the hands of Moses, fell from his hand, and were broken. They were afterward written anew, and placed within the ark of the covenant, beneath the mercy seat. This well illustrates the covenant of works under which man was first placed, when by transgression he fell, and the covenant was broken. Under the new covenant of grace, founded on better promises, the law is written by the Divine Spirit on the heart of the believer, and the faithfulness of God in the covenant is pledged. There are two distinct yet ever united blessings of this covenant referred to in the Old Testament, and quoted by Paul in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews. The first is, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The second is, "I will put my laws in their

minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be my people." Christ's redeemed people are a "peculiar people," ever zealous in good works. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation" ever teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, &c. Christian experience will always accord with and appreciate the sentiment in Romans, sixth chapter, fourteenth verse, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace;" not under the law as a covenant of works unto life, but yet under it as the perfect rule of duty, delighted in by the exercise of that love which is implanted by the Holy Spirit.

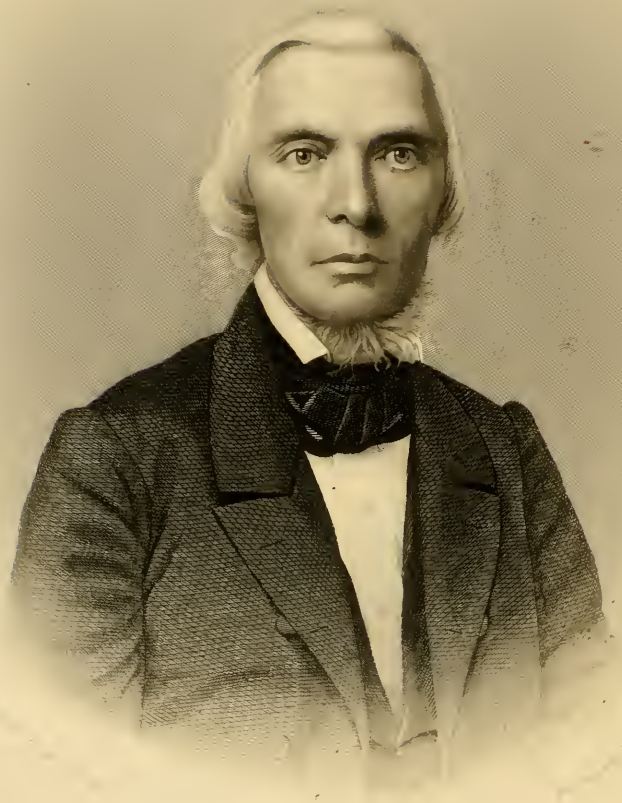
"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear His pardoning voice,
Will change a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.

"What shall I do? was once the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now."

5. We learn that *this knowledge and persuasion*, or an assured faith in Christ, is the spring of true enjoyment and happiness in the soul.

"Thou wilt keep him in *perfect peace whose mind is staid on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.*" In proportion as the soul of the believer is *staid* upon Christ, in full persuasion and confirmed faith, will he have peace, *perfect peace.* In illustration of this, we shall merely quote three passages from the New Testament. Romans, v, 1—5: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access to the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Philippians, iv, 6—7; "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the *peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through *Christ Jesus.*" Romans, viii, 31—35: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for

us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" He whose soul can cultivate the spirit of these passages is the happy man.



J. P. Stockton

THE TWO COURSES.

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If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—1 *John*, i, 8, 9.

Surely this auditory is not merely *metropolitan*. Rather, to a great extent, it must be *cosmopolitan*. Allow me, therefore, to inquire—Where are you from? When are you going home? And what would you like to take with you? I have something to commend to you. Hear me patiently! And God grant, for Christ's sake, by the Holy Spirit, that good may be done here this morning, which shall extend into all the earth, be multiplied through many generations, and endure even unto eternity. Amen, and let all the people say, Amen!

The text introduces an infinitely important *personal* subject. It is the language of St. John, in the 8th and 9th verses of the first chapter of his first epistle: "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Here, you perceive, are *two courses*. Which shall we take? Shall we *deny*, or *confess?* deny our *sins*, or confess our *sins?* deny our sins and *deceive ourselves*, or confess our sins and *secure forgiveness?* deny our sins, and deceive ourselves, and *have no truth in us;* or confess our sins, and secure forgiveness, and be *cleansed from all unrighteousness?* We may take either course; but, if we choose the former, we shall be left to ourselves, and will soon ruin ourselves; while, if we choose the latter, as certainly we ought to do, God pledges His faithfulness and justice for our full salvation. The

Lord help us to consider the subject well, and decide and act upon it wisely.

I. The Wrong Course.

"*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*"

Now, the *truth* is the *same*, whether it be *in* us or *not* in us. We have no power to *change* it by letting it *into* us, or shutting it *from* us, or in any other way. Christ said: "*The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.*" What difference does it make to the *light*, whether a man's eye be single or evil? i. e., *clear* or *clouded, healthy* or *diseased?* It makes a great difference to the *man*, but none to the *light*. If it be shut out from the man, *he* remains in darkness; but the light itself is as brilliant and beautiful as ever. And it is just so with the *truth*. What difference can it make to the *truth*, whether a man receive it or not? It makes a great difference to the *man*, but none to the *truth*. Let him close his soul against it as carefully as he may, it shines everywhere else; and its witnesses only pity him for his folly. As well might a man, with a sore eye, try to put out the light of the sun; as a sinner, with a sore conscience, try to put out the truth of the Bible. God made the sun a *light-bearer*, and the Bible a *truth-bearer;* and as long as the one gives *light*, the other will give *truth*. Let the diseased eye be cured, and it will enjoy the light; and so, let the sinful conscience be relieved, and it will enjoy the truth.

Again: If a man *deceive himself*, what does he *gain* by *that?* Can he deceive *everybody else?* Nay, is he sure of deceiving *any*body else? Especially, can he deceive God? What then? Here is a man charged with sin. His parents know he is a sinner; his early companions know he is a sinner; his wife and children know he is a sinner; his business associates know he is a sinner; and above all, God knows he is a sinner. But, somehow, he deceives himself with the notion that he is *not* a sinner. What does he gain by this? It were a thousand times better if his friends were deceived, so that he understood the truth. His salvation depends on his action, and his action on his conviction, while his conviction, alas! is false. He has *deceived* himself, and therefore is likely to *destroy* himself. It is a kind of moral insanity. The sinner rejects all the evidence in the

case, despises facts and devotes himself to phantoms; isolates himself from the sympathy of humanity, defies the scrutiny of Divinity, boasts of his freedom from sin, and idles away his life as though there were no ill to be feared in time or eternity. Surely every man should pray that, whatever else shall happen, he may never fall into such madness as this.

We may *say* "we have no sin," but we *have* sin. Deceived or not deceived, the fact remains the same. The *truth* may *not* be *in* us, but the *sin is in* us.

How strange it is, that any should be disposed to deny sin! Look for a moment at some of the questions connected with such denial. For instance—

WHAT KIND OF A BOOK IS THE BIBLE, IF "WE HAVE NO SIN?" Here, in part at least, is the oldest, and in all respects the most sacred book in the world. Pre-eminently, it is a historical and prophetical book. Its history goes back to the beginning of time; its prophecy, forward to the end of time. In both relations it is universal. It commences with our race in its smallest origin, and concludes with its last and greatest expansion. But this history—what is it? It is the history of sin and salvation! And this prophecy—what is it? It is the prophecy of sin and salvation! These are the all-pervading and all-controlling themes of the whole book—sin and salvation. Now, if "*we* have no sin," there *is* no sin; and if there be no *sin*, there is no *salvation;* and if there be *neither* sin nor salvation, this history is a *lie*, and this prophecy is a *lie*. Nothing can be plainer than this: if there be neither sin nor salvation, *the whole Bible is a lie*—for, if sin and salvation be abstracted from the Bible, nothing is left.

AGAIN: WHAT KIND OF A WORLD IS THIS, IF "WE HAVE NO SIN?" If the Bible be supposed false, our knowledge of the world must be derived from the world *itself*. There is no other authority. The Maker of the world, if there be any, says nothing. Angels, if there be any, say nothing. Disembodied men, if there be any, say nothing. Men in the body are passing shadows, in comparison with the age of the earth. Profane history is all modern history. Mythology and poetry are inventions and dreams. The records of science are recent. The monuments of art are recent. Oral traditions are confused and untrustworthy. Nothing is left, as a really-ancient source of instruction, but the surface of the planet itself.

True, this is more instructive than it was. Geology opens its strata, like so many pages of a legible and divine volume. But what does it teach? Substantially, it teaches that the world has always been as full of evil as it is now—always a world of suffering and death. As to prophecy, if prophetic at all, it teaches that the world will always remain, as it has been and is, the awful realm of suffering and death.

What—say you—does not the earth bear testimony to *sin?* Not a word like it! And does it not intimate a hope of *salvation?* Not a word like it! How, then, do you account for its suffering and death? Not in any way! There is no use in trying. We may suppose an Almighty Devil made the world, and provided suffering and death for his amusement! Without the Bible, we are at an utter loss to account for anything.

Again: WHAT A STRANGE THING IS CONSCIENCE, IF "WE HAVE NO SIN!" If the Bible be false in its allegation of sin, and nature silent as to the existence of sin, and the truth is, that "we have no sin," why the condemnations of conscience? These are known everywhere. Both sexes, all ages, and all conditions, know what is meant by an accusing conscience. The stout man trembles, and the pale woman withers, under its power. The little child, downcast and blushing, shows its early influence. Old age, hard-featured and long-practiced, can scarcely hide the pains it inflicts. The savage feels it in his most secret haunts, and the refined civilian enters no social circle where conscience clings not to him, the closest companion and quickest respondent in all the group. But how is this, if, indeed, "we have no sin?" Can any man tell?

Again: WHAT A STRANGE THING IS HUMAN HISTORY, IF "WE HAVE NO SIN!" True, as stated, this is not an ancient history. Still, it includes several thousand years. Trace it, and what do we see? All manner of *acknowledgments of sin!* Where there is no Bible, conscience prompts such acknowledgments. Natural evils become tokens of the wrath of superior powers whom man has offended. Storms, earthquakes, volcanoes, are tokens. Every eclipse, of sun or moon, is a token. Every drought, famine, pestilence, every ordinary disease, or pain, accident, bereavement, is a token. Gods multiply in heaven, like the stars. On earth, they are as numerous as the hills and woods, streams and waves, or even as the animals in all. There is no end of gods; and every god is

angry, and every evil a judgment. So, temples are built, altars erected, priesthoods consecrated, shrines endowed, sacrifices offered, and all rites of worship established. Are not such the facts of heathenism, through the whole historic period? On the other hand, where the Bible has been known, and even before its existence, according to the Patriarchal traditions adopted and sanctioned by it, what do we see but a corresponding though truer and sublimer course? The Patriarchs confessed sin and offered sacrifices; the Israelites did the same; Christians, virtually, have always done the same. First came the family altar; then, the national tabernacle; then, the national temple; and, since these, innumerable cathedrals, churches, and chapels, all over the world: all symbolizing the same things—the confession of sin and hope of salvation. How, then, shall we account for all this, if, indeed, "we have no sin?"

But, look at one other question, a moment: WHAT KIND OF A BEING IS GOD, IF "WE HAVE NO SIN?" To me, it were as reasonable to say, we have no God, as to say, "we have no sin." Still, the text supposes the sinner to deceive himself, not by denying God, but by denying sin. It is proper to ask, therefore, what kind of a being is God, if "we have no sin?"

Why, in addition to all minor fabrications, has He allowed this great historical and prophetical fiction—this most mischievous falsehood of the Bible—to be imposed, not only on the ignorant and vicious, but also on the wisest, best, and noblest of mankind? Has He no concern for His own honor—no regard for our interests? Are truth and falsehood one to Him?

Why, also, did He create such an imperfect world as this? If there be no *sin* in it, why so many *evils?* Could He not have made it a home of safety, bliss, and immortality? What good does it yield Him to breathe the blue famine on a moaning continent? or let loose the plague or cholera, to glide like a curse round the globe? What pleasure can he find in burning up little infants with scarlet fever, or strangling them with whooping-cough, or stupefying them with dropsy on the brain? Of what advantage is it to Him to consume the lungs of youthful beauty and genius? to craze the only son of the poor widow—driving the one to the madhouse, and the other to the grave? to paralyze the father of a family, and lay him helpless for years in the midst of the dependent group, to whom he becomes a burden, instead of proving an aid? or, to take from an affectionate

old man his last child, and turn the tottering steps of the friendless survivor to the gate of an alms-house for the shelter of his last sad days? Does it please the Omnipotent to shake a city into ruins by an earthquake, or overwhelm it with the lava of a volcano? But, why multiply instances? Let us pass on.

Why, then, does God set up this power of conscience in our breasts? Are not external evils enough? How can He, in addition to all these, as if with fiendish malice, enthrone an everlasting liar and irresistible tormentor within us, to accuse us falsely, and scourge us pitilessly, day and night, at home and abroad, as long as we live? Is not this the very climax of infinite tyranny?

And yet again: How is it that God has *perpetuated* this condition so long? If the Bible be a lie, what an *old* lie it is! And as for the world, even if the Bible be true, how *long* the world has been in ruins! And if the Bible be *not* true, who can tell how much *longer* the world has been in ruins? And what an ancient oppressor is conscience! And as for society, how Protestantism, Romanism, and Grecianism; Mohammedanism and Judaism; Lamaism, Foheism, and Buddhism; Brahminism, Parseeism, and Fetichism; and all manner of religious impositions—and, with these, all manner of civil despotisms—have crowded the ages, and enclosed, covered, crushed, and cursed, all nations and generations! There has been no respite—none, none! Still, we speak of an infinitely-perfect God, as creating, upholding, and overruling, all! Who can account for these things, if "we have no sin?"

Alas, my friends! we have dwelt on these almost irreverent topics long enough to see, that, "*if we say we have no sin*," we do indeed "*deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" The *truth* is, that the *Bible* is *true!* The truth is, that the sin charged against us by the Bible is *justly* charged, and that all the evils in the world have been occasioned by sin! The truth is, that conscience rightly condemns us! The truth is, that society has acted properly in confession of sin! The truth is, that God has been constrained to manifest Himself unto us in ways opposite to those He would have preferred, because of our sin! The denial of sin is the essence of infidelity. If we deny sin, we deny salvation; if we deny salvation, we deny the Saviour; if we deny the Saviour, we deny God; and if we deny God, all faith is gone, and with it all hope, and nothing remains but the deepest despair of utter unbelief. The Lord save us from such

an issue! From all untruth and all self-deception, let us all unite in praying, "*Good Lord! deliver us!*"

And what now? If it be so plain that the denial of our sin is the wrong course, let us turn to the *right course*—the confession of sin.

II. THE RIGHT COURSE.

"*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

It seems strange that we are so *reluctant* to confess our sins. True, in addition to natural depravity, we have peculiarities of personal wickedness which it may appear best to conceal. The depravity is common. No one has more reason to be ashamed of that than another. Besides, it is rather a misfortune than a fault. But our personal sins are voluntary; and therefore we feel our responsibility for them, and the humiliation of them. Still, as every man has thus sinned; and we are told that "*whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;*" and so have cause to believe that there is not as much difference among sinners, in the sight of God, as might be supposed: it is strange, after all, that we are so reluctant to make confession.

The fact is, I presume, that, in all ordinary cases, we are so conscious of our depravity, and so full of recollections of voluntary iniquity, that each one thinks himself *worse* than his neighbor, and is afraid to let it be known how vile he has been, lest it should be *demonstrated* that he is worse. If, however, as already intimated, all men should freely and fully confess their sins, though a great diversity of acts would appear, and some seem much more abominable than others, I question whether one heart would appear much purer or less selfish than another. I question whether the principles of sin would not be found nearly the same in all. Our Lord did not make much difference between the scribes and pharisees on one hand, and the publicans and harlots on the other. The pride and hypocrisy of one class, were as offensive to Him as the fraud and pollution of the other. The element of every sin is in every soul. Education, custom, interest, and other social restraints, modify the manifestations of sin; and we cannot allow much more than this. Let us, therefore, lay aside our reluctance to confess. Surely, cases of real self-deception cannot be numerous! Surely, the most of us must know, that, *instead* of having "*no* sin," we are *filled* with sin, and *covered all over with it!*

The Bible gives two *definitions* of sin. One is, "*a transgression of the law.*" And what is the law? Take the two great summary commandments—love to God and our neighbor. Who has not transgressed this law? Or, to be more specific, take the Decalogue. Reflect upon each of its prohibitions. And who has not transgressed this law? Nay, who has not transgressed every prohibition in it? "Oh!" methinks some one exclaims: "*that* is *too hard! I*, at *least*, am no *thief*, no *liar*, no *murderer*, no *adulterer!*" But *is* it too hard? Open the Old Testament at the Decalogue. Open the New, at the Sermon on the Mount. Compare the two. Apply the spiritual principles, the heart-searching expositions of the law, in the Sermon on the Mount, to your own conscious history, and see if it is not harder to tell what you have not been, as a sinner, than what you have been! For myself—speaking honestly in hope of speaking usefully—I could not dare to say that there is a single moral precept in all the Bible, the principle of which I have not violated. I cannot believe that there is a person present who has not violated the principle of every moral law. It must be so! Nor only so: but, when we review our lives, from childhood to the present; when we recall our overt acts; how many of us must say—*There!* and *there!* and *there again!* if not the fully developed crime, if not quite the equivalent of the crime, still there is a distinct remembrance of something of the same nature, and with the same tendency, and God alone is to be praised that it did not issue in the complete iniquity! If it had not been for some divine check, the devil would have hurried us into horrors which would long ago have destroyed both body and soul in hell!

But, to confirm our conviction of sin, we must call up the *other* definition of it. I mean this: "*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" Who has not sinned in *this* way—neglecting opportunities of doing good? I was about to say that I would like to see the man who can stand up and declare himself free from this form of sin. And yet, on reflection, I could not bear to see him. What an awful example of self-deception would such an apparition be? Opportunities of doing good! Alas, how many we neglect every day! We see the opportunity; know the good that is needed; know how to do it; and yet do it not. It matters not what prevents: we might do it, but neglect it, and so it remains undone. O, if it were not for the frequency of this sin; if, instead of

yielding to it, every man improved every opportunity of doing good to the utmost of his power; what a heaven upon earth would open around us! But we are poor, indolent, unenergetic, unsacrificing, selfish, and self-indulgent sinners—good-for-nothing sinners!

And what now? If thus, in all connections, we *know* we *are* sinners—let us *confess* our sins. But—*how* shall we confess? To the *priest? God forbid!* Never let us be caught in such a trap as that! It were far better to confess to the devil; for he could not take such advantage of the confession. "*Confess your faults one to another,*" said St. James, "*and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.*" This was written to Christians at large, and probably refers to such faults as occur among those who strive most to avoid faults; such as may be discreetly mentioned, for mutual advice, and the holy influence of united and earnest prayer. It gives no Christian, and especially no priest, a right to become an inquisitor, even into the faults of a single brother—much less of a whole church, male and female, old and young!

As to sins committed *before repentance*, the passage does not appear to refer to them at all. They may, or may not, be confessed—according to circumstances. Such confessions are matters of private judgment. If they may do good, if they are required by the principles of righteousness, if restitution be necessary, let the confession be made, either publicly or privately, as shall seem best. But if no good be promised, I see no necessity for such confessions, at least of *private* offences. *Public* offences are properly confessed in public. So DAVID cried, most piteously, "*Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation!*" And in like manner, St. PAUL wrote to TIMOTHY, that, before his conversion, he was "*a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious;*" and so to the GALATIANS, that, "*beyond measure he persecuted the church of God and wasted it.*" The crimes thus alluded to were publicly known, and therefore properly repented of in public.

Even in ordinary cases, however, in addition to whatever special acknowledgments may be made to parties concerned in fulfilment of righteousness, every sinner should unhesitatingly confess that he is a sinner, and that, as such, he needs the salvation which is in Christ Jusus. Instead of pretending that he has no sin, he is to be willing, as a man among men, to be recognised as a sinner.

But, pre-eminently, he must confess to God. He must remember

the holiness of God, the holiness of His law, and His abhorrence of iniquity. He must also remember, that notwithstanding God's forbearance toward him for Christ's sake, and notwithstanding whatever natural prosperity he enjoys, still, as a sinner, "*the wrath of God abideth on him.*" He must remember, also, how thoroughly God knows him, how constantly God searches him, how responsible God holds him; and, overwhelmed by the heinousness and awfulness of sin, he must confess his sins in all their fulness and in all their foulness, and cast himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then, no longer attempting the slightest self-deception; admitting, at last, the whole truth; performing his first duty; in a word, pursuing the right course, its inestimable advantages will immediately follow. "*If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Look at these blessings. First—*forgiveness!* God will "*forgive us our sins.*" It matters not how great our natural depravity, or voluntary iniquity—if we confess, God will forgive! Not one charge shall remain against us, in all the book of His remembrance. We shall stand in His sight as freely and fully justified as though we had never sinned.

But, shall we *know* that we are forgiven? Well, it is easy to perplex ourselves here. Suppose we could *not* know it. Still, if forgiven, we should be as *safe* as though we *did* know it. Besides, we might *believe* it, if we could not *know* it, and it is the distinction of the Christian, that he walks "*by faith, not by sight.*" But much depends on what is *meant* by knowing it. What, then, *is* meant?

See! here is a sinner who has long tried to deceive himself with the notion that *he has no sin.* Hitherto, in this relation, there has been *no truth in him.* At last, however, he is convinced that it is utter folly, and an aggravation of his guilt, to continue such a course. Therefore, accepting all that the Bible says, in relation to sin, and the Saviour from sin, HERE—whencesoever he comes and wheresoever he is going—HERE, in the very Capitol of the United States, and in this Hall of the House of Representatives, on this holy sabbath, *the 1st day of April*, 1860, he *confesses* his sins, and trusts in God's faithfulness and justice for the *forgiveness* of his sins! Immediately his conscience is relieved. The load of guilt is removed. He is strangely light-hearted. "*The peace of God, that passeth all understanding,*" apart from experience, becomes plain enough as a matter

of experience. His soul overflows with it. Directly, passages of Scripture, often read or heard, but never before properly felt, glide into his memory, like shooting stars into the sky, and he exclaims: "*O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me!*" And then he calls to the church: "*Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.*" "*As far as the East is from the West, so far hath the Lord removed my transgressions from me.*" Now, I know what the apostle meant when he said: "*Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" See! He *knows* that he has *faith in Christ*—for this is a *fact* of *consciousness;* he *knows* that he has *peace* with *God*—for this also is a *fact* of *consciousness;* and, from these facts of consciousness, he spontaneously, irresistibly, and undoubtingly *infers*, or *believes*, or, if you please, *knows*, that he is forgiven. Now, is not this *enough?* Is it not all that is ever *meant* by knowledge? We may suppose twenty years to go by, and at the end of them, in some Christian assembly, or at home on his death-bed, the still happy believer declares: on the morning of the *first day of April*, 1860, in the Capitol, at Washington, the Lord graciously set my soul at liberty. Before that time, I had tried to deceive myself with the notion that I was not a sinner; but then I saw that all such efforts were vain and ruinous. I saw and felt that I was a sinner. I confessed my sins; cast myself, vile as I was, on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; and, from that time to this, I have never doubted that God then forgave my sins. My heart was filled with peace, and my tongue thrilled with the rapture of irrepressible thanksgiving. By the greatness of my relief, and the joyfulness of my new emotions, "*the Spirit of God*" bore witness with my spirit, that I was "*a child of God.*"

Now, if *this* be what is meant by knowing that we are forgiven, certainly we may know it. Certainly, thousands do thus know it. Certainly, every confessing sinner here may thus know it. But if you go beyond this; if you assert a distinct, intelligible, inspiration or revelation of the Holy Spirit, apart from the Bible, apart from emotional experience, and apart from the conviction thence resulting: something equivalent to the inspiration of the prophets, in virtue of which they were enabled to testify—"*Thus saith the Lord*"—if you mean *this*, then all I have to say is, it *may* be so; but if it *be* so, I

have not yet known it in *my own* experience, and therefore cannot bear *personal testimony* to its occurrence. Be this, however, as it may, the doctrine is clear and sure, that whosoever will confess his sins shall be forgiven, and be unspeakably safer and happier than he can be without confession. Therefore, I thus preach and urge confession.

But forgiveness is not the *only* blessing which follows confession. See! "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" This is a still *greater* blessing. It relates not only to the *condition*, but also to the *character;* not only to freedom from sin, but also to renewal in holiness; not only to exemption from punishment for the past, but also to the improvement and usefulness of the future.

The context declares: "*This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*"

This, indeed, is a great and glorious work. This is regeneration. This is re-creation. This is sanctification. This, though in some cases commenced, developed, and almost perfected, apparently in a very short time, remains, nevertheless, a life-long work. Natural corruption is destroyed. Voluntary wickedness is substituted by habits of righteousness. It becomes our second, better, and proper nature to do the will of God. His law is no longer knowingly and wilfully broken. Its precepts are obeyed; and its principles held in highest veneration. The Decalogue is not too strict for us now. Even the Sermon on the Mount is not now a whit too searching. The standard of perfect love to God and man is not too elevated. Opportunities of doing good are not too frequent. The obligations to do good are not too stringent; and the satisfaction of doing good becomes infinitely attractive. Day after day, he who was once so base a sinner, grows more and more a saint, and assumes the image of God. Wherein he remains infirm, or subject to error, or inadvertently falls into wrong-doing, he is instantly prompted to confession, supplication, and correction, and proves that the blood of Christ is still as cleansing as ever, and doubts not that he shall at last put on the white robe in heaven, as the symbol of entire and eternal redemption.

Such a man is fully provided for—both as to his condition in this world, and his destiny in the world to come. Having found the right course, he has only to pursue it, with undeviating fidelity. Whatever God has promised, for body or soul, of grace or glory, on earth or in heaven, the Christian is sure of its fullest enjoyment. He realizes his interest in the sublime announcement of the apostle: "*All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*"

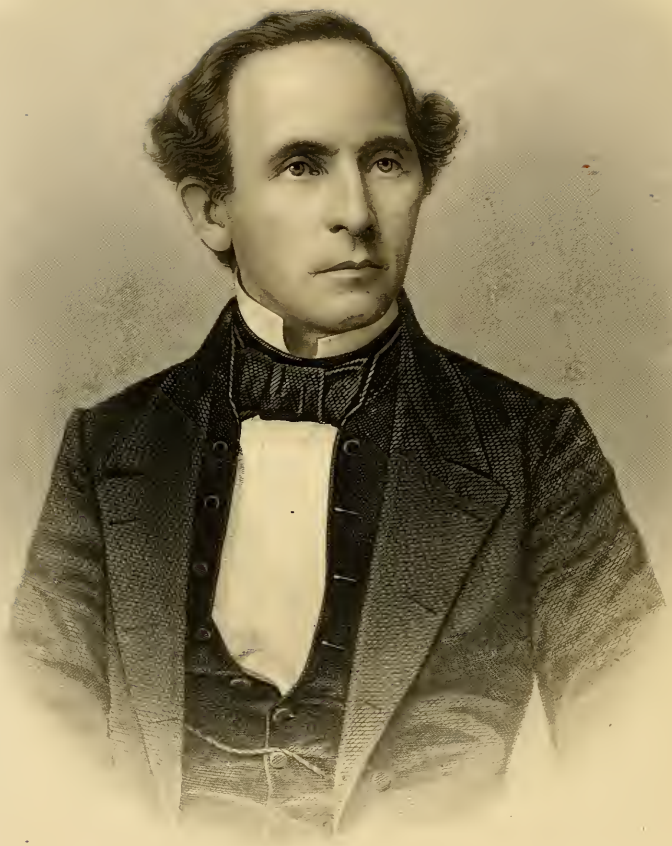
To such a man, the Bible, the world, and conscience, the history of society and the administration of the government of God, compose one grand natural and moral harmony, universal, perpetual, and divinely enchanting. By the confession of sin, he accounts for all the past; and by the securement of salvation, he anticipates the vindications of all the future. Hear him narrate the perfection of the beginning! Hear him forecast the perfection of the conclusion! See how God is glorified, and man honored, by the whole contemplation! See how Christ shines forth, as all in all! Then ask the triumphant believer, on what he relies for the fulfilment of his hope? And hearken to his noble answer!

Do you *ask* me on what I *rely* for the *fulfilment of my hope?* I *rejoice* to tell you. I possess the true solution of the mystery of the world. *It is the promise of God.* I hope for all that God has promised. From the origin of sin, He has always promised redemption from sin. And here, in this text, both His *faithfulness* and *justice* are *pledged* for the performance of His promise. The universe may dissolve as a dream; but what shall impair the faithfulness or pervert the justice of God? "*I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning.*" The priest in the temple, the invalid on his couch, and the prisoner at his window, watch for the morning; the sailor, the soldier, and the hunter, and how many more, and with how much anxiety, all watch for the morning. The traveller, especially, gone up the day before, and cowering all night among the summit snows of the Andes, the Alps, or the Himalayas, how bravely he waits, and how intently he watches, for the morning! He hopes, without a promise! But, does the sun disappoint him? Never! At a certain hour, the black zenith grows blue again, the gray east yellows into amber and flushes with rose, innumerable scintillant splendors shoot through the rose

and amber, and spread abroad in the upper blue, and, at the minute—nay, at the moment—there it flashes! rim, half-round, all-round, filling the world with glory! And the startled stars veil their faces, and retire. The sky shows but one light. The mountains put on their purple and gold, and pay princely obeisance. The living torrents catch the living lustre, and leap with it into a thousand welcoming valleys. From coast to coast, the billowy seas uplift their jewelled arms, and clap their hands for joy. And the soul of the traveller, the greatest thing in all the scene, infinitely greater than the sun itself, looks out through the calm eyes of his little body, lost like a snow-flake among the cliffs, with tremulous tongue modulates the thin air into the instant music and rapture of thanksgiving, and charms his Maker, and blesses his race, with the renewal of the angels' song, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!*"

And what now? "*I wait,*" not for the *sun*, but "*for the Lord: my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope.*" I wait with the promise! "*My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning*"—more *intensely*, more *confidently*, and with *infinitely more glorious expectations!* And shall He who *made* the *sun* be *less punctual* than the *sun itself?* Is the *coming* of the *Lord* less certain than the *sunrise?* Never! no, never! The day, the hour, the moment, is appointed, and nothing can delay it. Then He, who is "*the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person*"—who, for the present, is detained at the "*right hand*" of God "*in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;*" and who, as He is beloved of the Father, and adored and worshipped by saints and angels in heaven, is still "*the desire of all nations*" on earth—will "*appear, the second time, without sin, unto salvation;*" not tinting the earth, and seas, and skies, with the transient beauty of the sunrise, but raising the dead, changing the living, judging the world, glorifying His people, recreating heaven and earth, and establishing His everlasting kingdom of "*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"

Come, then, ye sinners! one and all; come, and make confession. Remember! "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;*" but, "*if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"



D. S. Doggett

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER AND HIS WORK.*

BY REV. DAVID S. DOGGETT, D. D.,
OF THE VIRGINIA CONFERENCE.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Ephesians*, iii, 8—11.

While the apostle John is not surpassed by the apostle Paul in sublime views of the person of Christ, the apostle Paul, it is likely, surpassed all the other apostles in his statements of the vastness and grandeur of the economy of redemption. This fact is due, perhaps, to the combined superiority of his sanctified intellect, and "the abundance of the revelations" which he received. Be that as it may, it is altogether probable that the human mind could not soar more highly, or sweep more widely over the territory of revealed truth, than did his. I have observed, with respect to this apostle, that while there is no appearance of effort in his conception of divine things, there is every appearance of effort in his attempt to express them in human language; an effort which frequently betrays itself in the formation of new compounds, and in the most astonishing accumulation of epithets, piling them one upon another in a mighty climax, as if some of those mysteries which he had learned in "the third heavens," and which it was "unlawful for man to utter," were, nevertheless, struggling to render themselves intelligible to mortal ears.

* This sermon was delivered in the Fourth Street Church, Lynchburg, Va., Sunday, November 20, 1859, on the occasion of the ordination of deacons.

The greater part of this epistle may be taken as an example of this wonderful conflict between the wealth of inspired ideas, and the poverty of even inspired words suitably to announce them. Our text is undoubtedly a specimen of this peculiarity in the style of Paul. With no expectation of its complete exposition, I propose, by the help of God, to call your attention chiefly to THE ESTIMATE WHICH THE APOSTLE ENTERTAINED OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS COMMISSION RESPECTIVELY. I hope this theme will be deemed appropriate, especially to the solemn event which will close these services. We will accordingly examine;

I. THE APOSTLE'S ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF. It is thus expressed: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints." Let us endeavor, for a moment, to realize it. What an utterance, my brethren, of self-depreciation! How different from that self-laudation so common amongst us!

The term "saints," in this sentence, is but another word for all true Christians, without any special reference to the degree of their holiness. The phrase, "least of all saints," denotes the lowest possible grade in the church of God. To be "less than the least," it would seem, is to be absolutely nothing at all, in this respect; is to be reduced to a mere cipher in the evangelical arithmetic. Such, at least, appears to be the logical construction of the apostle's words. This self-diminution, or rather self-annihilation, excludes either all actual or all noticeable position amongst the genuine disciples of Christ. It was not intended to signify the former, inasmuch as the apostle considered himself as belonging to the general category of Christians, and rejoiced in the distinction. He undoubtedly meant the latter; that is, that he was too insignificant to be personally recognised as one of them. Although he had been saved by grace, and introduced into their fellowship, yet, after surveying their numbers and their ranks, he could assign himself no other place than at the feet of them all, and there only on the condition that it be universally and forever understood that he did not deserve to occupy so honorable a station. Such was Paul's estimate of himself.

As a matter of fact, according to our ordinary modes of judging, he was not only the chief of the apostles, but the holiest of Christians. We put him, by the consent of all Christendom, in the front rank of the servants of Christ. We must not forget, however, that, in this instance, he was giving his opinion of himself. And this

opinion was neither affectedly humble, on the one hand, nor sentimentally morbid, on the other. It was the simple, truthful, and healthful result of his religious consciousness.

On what grounds, it may be inquired, could he honestly entertain such an opinion of himself? We answer, on several. First, he considered himself to have been, previously to his conversion, "the chief of sinners," especially on account of his bigoted and malignant persecution of the early church; a crime which, at no period of his subsequent history, he could either forget or forgive. He ever recalled it as a reproach which no repentance and no zeal could efface. Secondly, the condition of any man, as an awakened sinner, and the terms on which he is saved, are such as necessarily to produce in him the spirit of total self-abnegation in the sight of God. From this stand-point he must inevitably contemplate himself, and from it make all his comparisons with his fellow Christians. Thirdly, the more enlightened any one becomes by the grace of God, the clearer are his discoveries of the depth of his degradation, and the extent of his indebtedness to divine mercy; and though these discoveries may, in reality, be no greater in him than in others, they must of necessity always appear so to himself, since it is not possible for any one to know another in the same sense, or to the same degree, in which it is possible to know himself. Consequently, no Christian can give a strictly accurate opinion of himself, without depreciating himself, with perfect sincerity, below any other true member of the church of God; without, in the very words of this apostle, "esteeming others better than himself." Fourthly, Paul's idea of his inferiority, as a Christian, was greatly intensified by the overwhelming majesty of his commission as an apostle; for which, it appeared to him, an angel would not have been sufficient, much less so sinful and imperfect a being as himself. This allusion he evidently makes in the language before us.

These several reasons, to adduce no others, fully sustain the fitness and propriety of Paul's apprehension of himself; and it affords a most useful lesson to all Christians, and particularly to all Christian ministers. The true and the only standard of self-estimation, to both, is absolute humility. "He that humbleth himself," says Christ, "shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." What a rebuke are these words to our pride; to that ambition which induces one "to think of himself more highly than

he ought to think;" to desire notoriety amongst his brethren; to seek places of preferment and of honor in the church of Christ; to inhale with complacency the breath of popular applause; to listen with self-gratulation to the accents of human devotion. Great God! if Paul, the very seraph of apostles, fulfilling Heaven's high embassy to the world, should consider himself "less than the least of all saints," what are we doing when, in our subordinate offices, with our contracted capacities, and our mere fraction of piety, we are soliciting to ourselves the admiration of all mankind! From these reflections, we proceed to notice;

II. THE APOSTLE'S ESTIMATE OF HIS COMMISSION. A remarkable contrast arrests our attention here. When speaking of himself, he sinks into nothing. When speaking of his commission, he cannot sufficiently magnify it. His opinion of the latter is comprised in no specific form of words, but in the exhibition of those grand objects which the commission itself contemplates. We shall endeavor to develop his idea from those objects. Amongst them we consider,

1. The publication of the Gospel, as foremost; its authoritative declaration to mankind. "Unto me," says he, "is this grace given, that I should preach amongst the Gentiles." To preach is necessarily the first and principal design of the great commission. The Gospel is God's message of mercy to the world. It must be proclaimed, as such, in the hearing of the world. And this can be legitimately and effectually done only when proclaimed by divine authority and with unadulterated simplicity. The preacher is God's ambassador, and must treat with men, on God's behalf, according to the tenor of his instructions. In discharging this function, he is invested with an awful responsibility; a responsibility to which there is none equal on earth; none greater in heaven. It is not, however, with the office which the Christian minister holds, that we are concerned to-day. It is with the proper appreciation of the message which he bears; "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

By "the riches of Christ," we are not to understand, I suppose, his personal excellence and wealth as the Lord and heir of all things. These are sublimely described in the Scriptures; pertain inalienably to Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind, and for his glory must be asserted in our sermons. For example, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" "The Word was made flesh, and

dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;" "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." These, indeed, are the riches of Christ; the riches of his perfections and of his dominion. But we are not, I presume, to understand these as referred to in our text. We are to understand the riches of redemption; the blessings of grace and the rewards of glory, originating from and summed up in Christ; which he has purchased by his death, and which he confers upon his people. By these they are enriched with all spiritual possessions in this life, and an eternal inheritance of bliss in the life to come.

These "riches," the text affirms, are "unsearchable;" not in the sense, as already intimated, that they cannot, in any degree, be ascertained or enjoyed by the people of God on earth; not that they lie beyond the sphere of immediate participation; not that they repose in some distant and unapproachable region of the universe, where, if ever, after ages of pursuit, they may be discovered. No, my brethren, this is not the character of these riches. On the contrary, they are present and accessible to all. They offer now their matchless resources to the wretched sons of want, and impart to the humble recipient a whole kingdom of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Yet, unlike all human possessions, beyond any possible degree of existing appropriation, however copious or costly, their stores are enhanced by a "length and breadth, a depth and height" of abundance and of fruition to be calculated only by the rule of an infinite progression. They are, so to speak, inexhaustible in their *quantity*. No demands and no participation of earth's redeemed multitudes, through an endless futurity, can lessen, for an instant, the sum of spiritual and celestial treasures. The wealth of empires may be wasted or dispersed; the restless hand of human enterprise, or the insatiable rapacity of human avarice, may sweep the subterranean repositories, in which nature hoards her selectest minerals, of their last shining particles; but "the riches of Christ" will, after cycles of immeasurable acquisition, continue to present to the saints, the boon of an undiminished plenitude.

"The riches of Christ" are, likewise, incalculable in their *worth*. In the estimation of wealth, value must be added to quantity. Quantity without value would be an encumbrance. The real estimate of an estate does not consist of its amount, but of the advantages which it confers, whether of pleasure or profit. Nevertheless, the most valuable of all earthly possessions include in their catalogues many portions both useless and defective. "The riches of Christ" are all equally precious, and have an excellence which even transcends the idea of their quantity. No standard of appreciation can determine their value. No numbers, no symbols, can represent it. No balances can weigh, no capacity contain, no line can fathom it. These "riches" cost the highest price known in all transactions, human or divine; they consist of the purest and the best blessings in the magazine of grace; they impart the richest good of which the immortal constitution of man is susceptible. In a word, they invest him with the permanent and imperishable fortune of a nature renewed in the image of God, and of conditions and agencies perpetually administering to its development and augmenting its bliss.

"The riches of Christ" are also incomprehensible in their *extent*. Their amplitude confounds not only our ideas of quantity and quality, but of space. They spread over an illimitable surface. They are diffused over a territory of sanctified existence untravelled and unexplored; nay, whose exploration will never be fully accomplished. No foot of saint, no wing of angel, can reach the boundary of that kingdom which Christ has purchased and replenished for his people. No seraphic voyager will ever circumnavigate its ocean of delights; no flaming adventurer ever scale its pinnacles of glory; no inspired speculations, no glorified imaginations, will conceive of those blessed distances which will ever open their attractive avenues to the enraptured progress and contemplation of the elect of God. As it is written, and as it will remain, in a higher sense, forever true, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

These "unsearchable riches" of Christ; this wealth of grace; this "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" it is the prerogative, the duty, the honor, of the Christian ministry to offer, in the name of the great Proprietor, as a sovereign gratuity to an impoverished world, that it may become their inheritance in time and in eternity.

2. Another object, of scarcely less importance, contemplated by the Christian ministry, is the vindication of the Gospel. It is "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God." The Gospel economy is, in the loftiest sense, a mystery; a mystery in itself, and in its successive evolutions. The origin and the purposes of it appertain exclusively to the unfathomable depths of the divine counsels, and, though partially disclosed in the lapse of ages, it will, nevertheless, remain to finite beings a mystery still.

In the course of human events, it must inevitably be assailed by objections arising from alleged and even apparent discordances with itself and with the constitution of the world. From these aspersions of its integrity as a system, it is the duty of the Christian ministry to defend it; to demonstrate its harmony and consistency, not only to silence objectors, but to elevate the conceptions of mankind respecting that wonderful arrangement by which the affluence of divine benevolence is so conspicuously displayed. And it is worthy of special remark, that the wisdom of the divine economy is eminently capable of proof. It can be shown, by incontestable evidence, that the assumed contradictions are the distortions of perverted reason, and not the deductions of sober truth. It is an undoubted fact, that "all men," who will, may "be made to see," may be constrained to acknowledge "the fellowship of the mystery;" the harmony of the Gospel. The Gospel, my brethren, is full of harmony. There are no discordances in it. We adduce several instances, for the purpose of showing the truth of this assertion.

It is in harmony with the perfections of God. All the representations of the divine character which it gives, and all the legitimate influence which it exerts, correspond with whatever enlightened ideas men, in every age, have entertained of God. It has, it is true, indefinitely unfolded the divine character; it has copiously supplemented the intuitions and the inferences of reason, but it has never once contradicted them. The God of the Gospel and the God of Nature are demonstrably one and the same.

It is in harmony with the intellectual constitution of man. God has implanted certain faculties in the human mind, and imposed upon it established laws of ratiocination, in the exercise of which it may reach, with sufficient satisfaction, such conclusions, on the great questions of existence, as come within the sphere of its operations.

The teaching of the Gospel is in accordance with these laws. It violates none of them. If it seem to do it, the fault is in its superficial apprehension, and not in its inherent contrariety. Rightly understood, its whole economy receives the unqualified approval of an unprejudiced judgment. What an unspeakable advantage the knowledge of this fact gives to a minister of the Gospel! What a noble consolation is it to him to know that the understandings of his hearers are on the side of his message; that he carries their convictions, if he cannot sway their hearts.

It is in harmony with the moral condition of man. Its adaptations, in this respect, are manifestly perfect. Whatever man's moral nature may have originally been, its present state is not a subject of doubt. Guilt, depravity, and wretchedness, are its invariable and melancholy features, certified not only by universal history, but by universal consciousness. With these painful aspects of humanity, the Gospel corresponds with an exactness which proves its divine authority. To guilt, it brings forgiveness; to depravity, holiness; and to wretchedness, peace and hope. It heals man's moral distempers, and restores the counterpart which he lost in the dislocation of the fall.

It is in harmony with itself. Skeptical perversity has enjoyed a malignant pleasure in endeavoring to render the Gospel self-contradictory; to impair its credit by verbal and doctrinal discrepancies. Such rejoicing, however, is vain. From beginning to end, in substance and in form, in doctrine and in narrative, the Word of God is, and has a thousand times been proven to be, one grand totality of truth, evincing the utterances and the plans of one and the same eternal Spirit.

It is in harmony with its own successive developments. It was not communicated to the world all at once and entire, but by a connected and expanding series, in which the germ unfolded itself into the flower. In these gradations there is no disagreement, but the most beautiful regularity. It is not improbable that the apostle refers here particularly to that part of the divine economy which originally restricted its blessings to the Jews, but which now, removing the restriction, offers them, without discrimination, to the world. This is one of its greatest peculiarities, and it is one of its greatest harmonies. Mankind, in the earlier period of their history, were not prepared to appreciate the truth in its fullness. It must

needs have been gradually revealed, and its first communications required to be fostered within the limited enclosure of a family, and then of a nation, that, thus attaining its maturity, it might become the heritage of all nations and of all time. So far, then, from being impugned on this ground, it only demonstrates that uniformity which is inseparable from the adjustment of the Gospel, on a universal scale, to the nature and the progress of human society. I repeat, that the Gospel is full of harmony, and that it behooves all ministers to show, and all men to see, "the fellowship of its mystery."

3. Yet another object, as indicated by our text, is contemplated by the Christian ministry; and that is, the organization and the collection of the accredited results of the Gospel into the bosom of the church. Results, glorious results, will follow well-directed efforts. God will "give the increase." The kingdom of Christ will be established on the earth. These trophies of the Cross are not to be left scattered at random on the field on which they are won. They must be gathered into the living temple of Christianity. These sheaves must not be allowed to lie exposed on the soil on which they are cut down. They must be garnered in their appointed repository. The conquests of the Gospel must be brought and arranged in its own consecrated citadel. In a word, converted souls must be introduced into the fellowship of the church militant, to be cherished and trained for the fellowship of the church triumphant, that the labor of the ministry may not be lost, and that the concentrated power of Christianity may achieve results still more illustrious. Ministers must consequently become pastors as well as teachers, and not rest in their pulpit successes, however flattering.

4. The ultimate object contemplated by God in the institution of the Christian ministry, as announced by our apostle, is of a very different kind. It is to promote the happiness of the higher orders of intelligences; and thus to combine, within the range of redeeming beneficence, the entire population of holy beings, whether in heaven or on earth. The economy of redemption, though primarily designed and especially adjusted to rescue and restore fallen humanity, has other aspects and other capabilities, and actually exercises other influences than those which belong to sinful mortals. It is not isolated. It is a blessing to the universe. Such, we distinctly learn, was the plan of God in its projection. It is "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," that

thus it should operate. And this purpose of imparting to all orders of holy beings the beneficial results of redemption, corresponds with the original unity of those orders in their creation; since God not only redeemed man, but also "created all things by Jesus Christ." Notwithstanding the difference in nature and condition between unfallen angels and fallen man, he who redeemed the latter made both, and holds to each the common relation of Creator and benefactor. That sovereign act, therefore, which saves a sinful world, could not fail to embrace, in the radiant circle of its benefits, those other beings whom he created, and whom he so highly endowed, but who did not forfeit their primeval purity. Hence, the unity of the higher orders of intelligences with man, by the act of creation, is the ground of that unity of purpose in the ultimate results of redemption, of which our text speaks in the following terms: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." With an humble endeavor to delineate this last aspect of our subject, we shall have accomplished our task.

We learn from these oracular words, that somewhere in the vast universe there are abodes of light and life, called "heavenly places," far superior to our own in the character of their provisions and the profusion of their embellishments. Perhaps, there are myriads of such places, diversified in magnitude and beauty by the endless contrivances of infinite skill. Not improbably, some of those "heavenly places" are the stars, whose remote spaces and brilliant orbs do not contradict our ideas of heaven itself. We also learn, from a source which has anticipated, by centuries, the conjectures of astronomy, that those "heavenly places," wherever located, are inhabited by families of intelligent beings, who retain their primitive perfection, and rejoice and flourish in the maturity and goodliness of unsullied virtue. Their rank in the scale of the creation is very exalted. They are not the commonalty, but the native aristocracy of the kingdom of God. They are "the principalities and powers in heavenly places;" celestial princes and potentates, filling their honored stations, and clothed with the splendors of their imperial offices. By virtue of their endowments, position, and advantages, for thousands of years, their attainments in knowledge necessarily surpass and confound all human standards. They are the intellectual magnates of the creation, whose easy and ready intuitions pour contempt

upon that learning and philosophy which are the boast of our age. To what perspicacity of vision; to what an elevation of thought, have they arrived! And yet they are ever making new accessions to their stock of information, by the ardor of their studies and pursuits.

The highest lesson which they learn, our text informs us, is not on the wide and magnificent theatre of God's handiworks about and above them, but on the lower level of the earth beneath them. Our world, physically considered, is but a diminutive and insignificant speck; is comparatively lost amidst the multitudinous glories of the Creator's dominions. But it is the scene of events which magnify and immortalize it into universal importance. Yes, this contracted habitation of ours, placed in the balances of the eternal sanctuary, outweighs in value all other worlds put together. It is not the size of a place which makes it memorable. The deeds performed upon it consecrate it to posterity. It was not the size of Thermopylæ, of Marathon, of Waterloo, of Bunker Hill, or of Yorktown, that has given them a perpetual notoriety. Few localities have less of natural attraction. It was the sublime valor and the pending issues concentrated, for the moment, within their narrow limits. So it is with respect to our earth in the system of unnumbered worlds. It has been dignified above all others, by a transaction which has invested it with boundless interest, and rendered it an exciting spectacle to their admiring throngs. That transaction is the economy of redemption, as it has been enacted and embodied in the church of God. Here alone has it been executed in all its solemn and affecting details. Here alone its august preliminaries were settled. Here alone the advent of the eternal Son transpired. Here alone dwelt "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Here alone the incarnate God acted and spoke. Here alone did he offer, in his adorable person, that "sacrifice for sin which forever perfects them that are sanctified." And hence alone did he return to "the heavens which have received him until the times of the restitution of all things." No other spot records such a history, or offers its competition for such renown. It has been nobly and eloquently said, that "our solar system is the Judea of the universe, and our insignificant earth the Bethlehem of this holy land;" that, under the Gospel economy, the solar system bears to all other systems the same moral relations which Judea bore to the world, and that the world now

bears the same moral relations to the solar system that Bethlehem bore to Judea. The battle, the victory, the monuments of redemption, are identified with the annals of earth, and will forever emblazon its fame.

On these accounts, the church on earth becomes not only the repository, but the mirror which, by its history, its memorials, and its triumphs, reflects "the manifold wisdom of God" from earth to heaven; and reflects it as no other medium possibly can. Creative wisdom appears as richly, perhaps, in more exquisite and gorgeous forms, in other and distant realms of existence, in which we may well suppose its treasures are lavished. It was reserved for the church, by means of the economy of redemption, to display the wisdom of God in a new light, in a grander variety of methods, and in more illustrious degrees, through the amazing instrumentalities which have been employed and the multiplied ends which have been accomplished by that economy.

Into this resplendent mirror, "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," bending from their thrones, perpetually gaze, "desiring to look into" the bottomless mysteries which it reflects. To them the church, as the receptacle of the wonders of grace, as the focus of the divine perfections, is an object full of attractions. It arrests and rivets their rapt attention, more than the scenes and associations of their imperial palaces. They are the vigilant spectators of its fortunes, the ardent students of its lessons, and the willing instruments of its progress. Throughout their bright gradations, they witness with transport its successive approximations to that eventful period when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

Nor do they merely enjoy the gratification of a hallowed curiosity. They participate in the moral effects of the economy of redemption. They are benefitted by the spectacle which they behold. Their superior natures glow with additional fervor at the marvellous revelations which rise to their sight. Their conceptions of that God in whose presence they have always stood, are indefinitely expanded; their virtues, long trained by celestial vocations, receive a holier impulse; and the anthem of their praise, which was struck on the morning of the world's creation, reaches its climax at the announcement of the world's salvation, "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of

mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

It is now time to draw these reflections to a close, and to apply them, in some sort, to the circumstances by which we are surrounded.

1. What this whole subject inculcates, with its entire weight, is the cultivation of humility in Christian ministers. What a presumption, what a distortion, what a curse, is pride in those who bear from God to their fellow men "the unsearchable riches of Christ." What a startling caricature is he who, coming as God's ambassador, exhibits his person and displays his talents for the admiration of his hearers; who arrogates to himself the importance of his position, and converts the ministry into the means of his own aggrandizement; who, instead of fulfilling his commission with scrupulous fidelity, is anxious that he may be considered the greatest of preachers, and deserving the principal honors of the church. Such was not Paul. Such may we never be. On the other hand, what a charm, what a happiness, is there in true humility! We can enter into the spirit of our work in no other way. It is the appropriate garb of a minister of Christ. It is the fundamental condition of his enjoyment. Above all, it is the sanctified source of his power. There lies the secret of his success. "When I am weak," exclaimed Paul, "then am I strong." When, in our own eyes, we are "less than the least of all saints," then are we, in the eyes of God, the greatest in the Gospel kingdom; then does "Christ work in us mightily;" then does he give "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power" to our preaching. Oh, when upon our knees before God, crushed with a sense of our sins, imperfections, and disqualifications, we wrestle in an agony of prayer for his blessing, and then go forth to meet the people in the gate, then God goes with us; then "the Word of the Lord has free course, and is glorified;" then is it made "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Let us not, my brethren, be solicitous about worldly honors. This is not the season for honors. Let us postpone the whole question until a future period. They will come in due time; come when our work is done. Then will the Lord "call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last even unto the first."

2. Our subject enforces, in no doubtful manner, the necessity of our understanding the import and the responsibilities of our message. We must know it ourselves, if we would make it known to others.

The range of our studies is great, and the means are ample. We have no time to waste in vain and frivolous pursuits. Our duties demand that we come full fraught into the sanctuary of God, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We must not only preach the Word, but we must repel assaults against it; take a step in advance of our ordinary occupation; must show its harmony; as far as possible, "make all men see the fellowship of the mystery" of redemption. To fulfil this indispensable department of the minister's vocation, it is obvious that he must become familiar with a new class of subjects. He must study to obtain those fundamental facts and general principles of truth, natural and revealed, which constitute the basis of the required demonstration. He must be a laborious student in all that sustains and illustrates the economy of salvation, as well as in all that explains its authentic import.

3. Let us realize the true grandeur of our commission. Let its sublime objects animate our souls. We labor not only for the salvation of men; we labor also for the edification of angels. We labor not only in the sight of mortals; we labor also in the sight of celestial beings. We preach to two congregations at the same moment; one below, and the other above us. What are the most splendid auditories ever convened on earth, compared with "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," who come down to engage in the solemnities of our worship. Methinks they are present with us now. Poised upon celestial pinions, they shed over us the odors of paradise. I seem to hear the rustling of their plumes. The air about us is full of fragrance. Their benevolent countenances beam with delight, and their eyes, sparkling with supernatural intelligence, are watching to catch, before we disperse, another proof of "the manifold wisdom of God." To use the impassioned strain of a familiar hymn;

> "Angels now are hov'ring round us,
> Unperceived they mix the throng,
> Wond'ring at the love that crown'd us,
> Glad to join the holy song."

May these considerations stimulate us to be "faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God;" and unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end: Amen.

John McClintock

LOVE THE SUM OF CHRISTIANITY.

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God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—1 *John*, iv, 16.

We find three things in this text: first, the *theology* of Christianity—"God is love;" second, the *experience* of Christianity—the Christian "dwells in God, and God in him;" and third, the *morals* of Christianity—the Christian "dwells in love." And these are the three points to which I invite your attention.

First, we have the *theology* of Christianity. By theology, we mean the doctrine of God. There is a wider sense in which the word is used, to include all the doctrines of any system of religion; and in that sense, the phrase Christian theology denotes the whole sum of the doctrines of Christianity. I use it now in the narrower and proper sense, to denote what we know of God. And the theology of Christianity thus defined is summed up in this one single sentence, "God is love."

There is a great mystery in all existence. The humblest and lowest forms of life are mysterious. How much greater is the problem of the supreme Life! In all ages, it has been an insoluble problem for the unaided human intellect. I shall not dwell upon the history of the strivings of the human mind to obtain a knowledge of the supreme Life. It is enough for me to recall to your minds what you know of this history; in all ages, a sad and painful one. In all the development of humanity, there is nothing nobler, yet nothing more sad, than its dim, sore "questionings of sense and outward things;" questionings that could find no answer, because sense and outward things cannot reveal a spirit; the "blank misgivings of a creature" that knew not its Creator, and could hardly imagine a Cre-

ator; vanishings of thought in utter darkness and tears. This is the history of the human mind, in its search after God, apart from His own revelation.

I will only hint one word upon what is called *philosophical* religion, whether within or without the sphere of Christianity. This, too, has failed, because it has not distinguished the thinking faculty in man from the moral and spiritual part of our nature. The thinking faculty, pursuing its solitary career, will not stop short of a demand for the absolute. Yet the absolute of the human mind is simply the unlimited, and that, again, is simply a negation of things and qualities in ourselves. The science of God, thus obtained, consists in a set of barren formulas. But the moral nature of man, from an inward necessity, demands a living being, demands faith in a living and a personal God. And the Christian revelation, brethren, comes to us as moral beings, and comes to the wants of our moral nature, postponing the other or merely logical demand. I say, plainly and boldly, *postponing the other*—putting that behind this. Christianity comes up to the wants of our moral nature, and promises to meet them.

And how does Christianity meet them? By the simple utterance of my text, "*God is love.*" When human hearts are worn and weary, when the human mind fails and gives up its search, both mind and heart may find rest and peace, if they seek it, in this blessed revelation of God—in this richest of all the utterances of this Book, "*God is love.*" This theology does not mean simply that God is the *source* of love. We are sometimes apt, I think, to enfeeble it in this way: to take away the vital force and power of it, by supposing that this declaration, "God is love," simply means that God is the fountain of love. It is something more, my brethren. Perhaps a word or two of the history of the interpretation of the text may explain better what I mean here. The earlier interpreters took the passage in its simple meaning, with direct reference to the wants of the human soul. Socinus and others since his time, make the love of God here purely figurative—an illustration, simply, of the divine mode of working, by the use of a human analogy. A better interpretation is given by Calvin, namely, that it is the *nature of God* to love man. Yet even this is a limitation of the doctrine of the text, confining it to the relation between God and man. Luther, following Augustine, with that strong grasp of the inner spirit of the Word of

God which characterizes him above all other interpreters, even where his actual power of criticism might have failed, interprets this passage, simply and correctly, to mean that love is the essence of the being of God; that God is love, and essentially nothing else than love. So strongly does he put it as to convert the proposition, and say that "love is God." John Wesley and others, who may be called the theologians of the higher Christian life, follow Luther.

And now let me say, that when we have this conception in its fulness, it *first* satisfies the demand of the heart, and *then* takes up and meets that other demand, which was postponed and put aside—the demand of the intellect. Christianity comes to the heart first, and seeks to fill it; and when the want of the heart is met once by such a revelation coming to the soul as a reality, then the fulness of the heart expands and fills the intellect as well. There is no want even of the logical faculty left unsupplied. Let us look into this, and see how it is. God is love, and essentially love. Does not this imply a personal God, in the first place? The great want of the logical faculty is an absolute. But all experience shows that no course of human inquiry has resulted in the knowledge of an absolute, and, at the same time, personal God. The last results, in the older systems, say Hindooism and Buddhism, are the ideas of absolute quiescence, of rest, or of non-being. The logical character of this doctrine might be vindicated, perhaps, as well as any other with reference to God, apart from Christianity. Later researches, professing to be scientific, have ended in making the whole universe (not the manifestation of God, but) God Himself, and thus give us Pantheism, instead of Theism. But take the proposition, God is love, and let it fill the heart, and let the intellect go to work upon it; and it will find satisfaction. If God is love, then God is a personal being. There cannot be love without a personal, vital activity; we can't conceive it. So, then, the logical issue of the proposition in my text is, that there is a divine person, a God, to whom we can speak and say, "O Thou!" One of the bitterest utterances that I ever heard was the saying of a great philosopher and divine of Germany, a man of pure and noble thinking faculties, and of noble moral faculties as well, but who had bewildered himself for years in mazes of thought, apart from the simple lines of Christian logic—that is, the logic of the heart. In speaking of this question, the love of God, he said to a friend of mine, "I have met several English and American divines and theologians, of the evangelical

school, so called, and I never met one of them that did not seem to recognise a personal God." The tears came into his eyes as he continued: "If I could do as you do—kneel down at night, and say to God, "*O Thou!*"—if I could say that, and feel it, I should be willing to die, and happy to die." I am very glad to say that his soul has since emerged into a higher and purer light and experience. But I state the case to show you what trouble, pain, and sorrow, may come of not getting this full Christian conception of God, through the experience of the heart.

In saying that "God is love," we mean, further, that He is a being whose very nature is to reveal Himself, to impart Himself, to diffuse to others His own essential bliss. So, then, we get these two *thoughts*, as well as the great richness and fulness of the feeling, God is love—first, there is a personal God; and second, He is a God that must reveal Himself, for love is His essence. Love is nothing if it is not revealing; love is nothing if it does not impart itself. Love is always gushing forth; it dies when it is concealed, when there are no manifestations allowed, or possible to it. You know, in your own affections, when they are strongest, they are always going out towards another object. So, then, we get from this idea of God the divine doctrine of the blessed Trinity—the manifestation of love in His Son through the Eternal Spirit. Here we find the key of all these rich, beautiful, yet otherwise mysterious phrases in John's Gospel, in which it speaks of the eternal love of the Father towards the Son, and of the glory shared between the Father and the Son, long before the world was. And from this idea of a revealing and manifesting God, we get also the true doctrine of the creation and of the universe. If "God is love," it is easy to explain the wondrous beauty and order of the "Cosmos." Love is essentially creative. Have you ever thought of that? The very primal function of love upon the earth is creative and productive. And so, all the splendor and all the magnificence of the physical universe, with all its adaptations to the wants and to the culture of humanity, are fruits of the love of God, the creating, the imparting love. But the highest manifestation of the creative love of God is that shown in making man a spiritual being, capable of reflecting God, made in God's image, endowed with free will and conscience. And the love was none the less, that this creation included the dread gift of conscience and of free will, implying the possibility of sin and fall. Of

the history of that fall I need not dwell, further than to say that it opens for us again the highest and richest manifestation of the love of God, after all. "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that "*God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*" And what a summing up of our knowledge of God's love to man is contained in the words, "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Can we fail to draw the inference, with St. Paul, that the love which makes such a gift will spare no other gift? "*He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" He "spared not" His own Son! There is no extremity of pain and sorrow that was not put upon that beloved Son. There is no intensity of anguish and torment that He did not undergo. God "delivered Him up for us all." "Delivered" Him? What does that mean? It means that He gave Him to endure every form of evil, and submitted Him to every possible agent and minister of evil—to evil of mind and heart and soul and body; to evil from devils, from bad spirits, and from men—that He might show His love for sinners. Delivered Him to the evil passions of men, stirred and empoisoned by the malice of devils; to their envy, which surrendered Him; to their treachery, which betrayed Him; to their cruelty, which scourged Him; to their pride, which scorned Him. "He spared not His own Son!" He that spared Isaac in the wilderness when Abraham, his father, was about to lift the knife; He whose infinite heart of love could not allow the son of that Arabian wanderer to die a sacrifice, but provided a ram that should take his place; He that spared Isaac, spared not *His own* Son! When *His* hour came, there could not be found in all the universe a lamb to take His place; for He was the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world." We can never weary of looking at the cross, as the highest manifestation of the love of God. O, let us look at it to-day, and say, "God is love!" O, Lamb of God, was ever pain, was ever love, like Thine? It was the infinite love of the Father manifested in the gift of His beloved Son!

II. The next point is, the *experience* of Christianity—the Chris-

tian "*dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him.*" Here we have the theology of the Gospel translated into life for us. The very essence of the Christian life is, intercourse with God. When we first come to the cross, and learn that the bleeding Jesus died for us; when we are first able to say, O Lord, I love Thee for Thine infinite love to me, in the gift of Thy dear Son; when our hearts feel the first throb of love to God because "*He first loved us*"—then, too, we have the first emotion of a genuine Christian experience. And the whole course of that experience, from its beginning, at conversion, to its consummation in glory, may be summed up in the language of the text—*the Christian* "*dwelleth in God, and God in him.*" The home of the Christian is in God—the home of his heart, the home of his affection, the home of his feelings, the palace of his richest imaginings, and the daily home of his common life. To dwell in God implies, that all the thought, and all the feelings, and all the plans, and all the aims, and all the affections of life, are given to God—lost and swallowed up in God. And not only does the Christian dwell in God, according to St. Paul, but "*God dwelleth in him.*" Not only does the true believer find his home in God, but, on the other hand, He makes the believer's heart His royal dwelling place on earth. The heart of the sinner—saved by grace—the poor heart that has been the seat of evil affections and passions—the heart, that seems so little and mean, is made the home of the infinite God.

He takes up his abode in the humblest soul that is willing to make room for Him, and *dwells* in it. Do you notice the phrase, and the force of it? Many people seem to think that religious joy is occasional and spasmodic; that nothing more than occasional visits from God can be expected in Christian experience. But this is not the doctrine of the text. It may be true that even an occasional glimpse of His ineffable beauty and glory is more than we deserve; it *is* an infinite condescension, on the part of God, to "visit man" at all. But His love in Christ goes far beyond this. He not only "visits and redeems" His people, but takes up His *abode* in their hearts. The Spirit of God makes His home in the soul, and forms its light and joy in the higher Christian life. A fitful experience, satisfied with rare glimpses of the face of God, finding Him only in occasional spasms of devotion, and then returning to the cares of the world—that it is not the fulness of Christian life or Christian experience. Mark, I do not mean to say that even an experience like this is not

a good thing. I would not venture to quench the smoking flax; nay, I pray God to kindle it into a flame in any poor soul that has but a limited experience of God. But the daily prayer of all earnest souls is, and ought to be, "Fill us with all Thy fulness, Lord."

And when the soul dwells in God, and is filled with "all his fulness," its experience is not only rich and joyous, but also calming and satisfying! How the cares of life vanish, as the soul more and more becomes filled with the love of God! How the fever of life is subdued, as the passions are quenched, or rather baptized, elevated, and transfigured, by the power and the presence of the love of God!

"O, love divine, how sweet Thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart,
All taken up by Thee!
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me!"

III. And now let us glance, *thirdly*, at the morals of Christianity, summed up, in our text, in the phrase, the Christian "*dwells in love.*" This is the third element in the trinity of the Christian life. The believer knows God as he loves Him; he experiences God in His indwelling Spirit; he works out the love of God within him in the moral manifestations of his daily life and conduct. He "dwelleth in love"—that is the phrase of the text. Love is the atmosphere that surrounds him. He takes it in, so to speak, with every breath; it is carried, by the working of the heart, into all the circulation, purifying, strengthening, giving *life* to his whole nature. And it is light as well as life. All duties, whether in our relations to God or to man, are clearly discerned in this luminous atmosphere of love. "We love Him," says the Apostle, "because He first loved us." There is no trustworthy morality which has not this for its basis and foundation, for "love is the fulfilling of the law." When the shrewd scribe, to tempt our Saviour, asked him, "*Master, which is the great commandment of the law?*" the answer came promptly in the summing up of all ethics in the simple injunction, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt., xxii, 31).

If you wish to build up a pure moral character in this life, do not put any altar before the altar of God—not even the altar of your

natural affections, not even the altar of your love for father, mother, sister, brother, wife, or husband. There is the rock upon which thousands have split. You remember the parable of the royal wedding feast; how, even when the banquet was ready, the oxen and the fatlings killed, the invited guests excused themselves. One went to his farm, another was busy with his merchandise, and a third had married a wife. And this parable is repeating itself in your personal history to-day. Your heart is set upon your farm, your merchandise, your wife, rather than upon God; unless you are, in the language of the text, "dwelling in love." The objects of our cupidity and of our natural affection are perpetually coming between us and God. "But are our natural affections to be crushed?" God forbid. Christ wept over the grave of Lazarus, His "friend." In this, as in many other cases, He displayed natural affection in all its fulness. There is nothing in religion incompatible with the natural affections. Nay, you will find that he who loves God most, has the strongest and most trustworthy love for kindred and friends; the human affections are purged of all dross by the fire of love to God.

And so, he that "dwelleth in love" is true, and faithful, and unselfish, in all the relations of life. Because he loves God, he "loves his brother also." In men, as in God, love is essentially creative and productive. It tends always to impart; never to withhold. The man that "dwells in love," can never be a churl. I am not now speaking of charity in that narrow sense to which we often restrict it—money giving; the very restriction showing that we value money more than all other things. I am speaking of the charity of a loving heart, full of feeling and of tenderness—a heart which cannot help imparting itself. Such a heart prompts to all good and kind actions, just when they are called for. It will give tears, when tears and sympathy can bless or sooth; it will give sacrifice, when sacrifice can help or save some suffering soul. Earnest love to God *must* display itself in tender attributes, in all kind and gentle ministrations, in all forms of benevolence and personal sacrifice. And these things become the more easy, the more we know of the love of God.

"The Christian dwells in love." Especially will this love show itself to those who are sharers in the same love. The Christian feels for those that are "of the household of faith"—an affection different in kind, as well as in degree, from that which he feels for

others. "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, *that we should love one another.*" Again, "this is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and *love one another.*" Our love to Christians, then, is something over and above the general duty of philanthropy and charity, because Christ has made our "love of the brethren" the test and criterion of our love to Him. I fear we are losing sight of this, and allowing the world's maxims to creep into the church. Let us not prate of Christian experience, if we fail in this very first of Christian duties. Do not profess to "dwell in God," if you harbor any feeling of envy or uncharitableness for your brethren in the church. How can we "love God, if we do not love our brother also?" "Let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God;* for God is love." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" O brethren, in this church, members surrounding this altar, partaking month after month the broken body and blood of Jesus—O, men of this church of God, I pray you and command you to love one another!

But Christian morality has its wider sphere. The love of God in the soul breeds affections that are not and cannot be limited by the boundaries of the family, the church, or the State. My first care, indeed, as a Christian, may be to look after those of "my own household," whether after the flesh or after Christ; but my charity, beginning at home, must not end there. Such a charity, so limited, is in fact but a refinement of selfishness. But the very office and work of Christian morals is to root out selfishness. The natural man makes himself the centre and the aim of his plans. By this criterion, we may test ourselves. In the natural life, *self* is the centre of all the activities, the affections, the aims of the man. If it be so with you, my friend, then you have not that experience of Christian love which develops Christian morality. It is the essential mark of the child of God to make love the governing principle of his life. That love is inconsistent with this supreme devotion to one's self. And as to indulging *hatred* toward any human being, the very mention of it is absurd. What is hatred? "It is the opposite of love." I grant you there could be no hatred if there were no love, just as there could be no darkness if there were no light. But that does

not vindicate hatred. There is no hatred in God. He loves all His creatures. He hates the ungodliness of men—their crimes, wrongs, and vices. He hates the wickedness of the world, but the world and man He *loves*. What is hate? It is wrath kept till it gets old. Can hate consist with virtue or with love? I do not say that *anger* is always inconsistent with love. God is angry with the wicked. But hate—there is no hate, there can be none, in the pure heart. The sun can never "go down upon your wrath," if your heart "dwells in love;" and so your anger can never harden into hate. If, then, you hate any man, my friend, pray God to take that evil spirit away; pray that you may be able to love your brother, as a sign of your love to God.

If what we have said be true, the science of Christian ethics is luminous to him who "dwells in love." No questions of casuistry can long perplex the loving soul. He finds it easy to perform his duties to God. Submission, trust, obedience—how *natural* these are, when the heart tends toward God by the gravitation of a perfect love! And this love is the surest bond of fidelity and perseverance; we cannot backslide unless our hearts grow cold. The needle of a genuine love never swerves from its polarity. Nor can *abstract* questions perplex the loving soul. It cares not to settle the ground of moral obligation, to ask whether its conduct shall sort with the "fitness of things," or with "general utility." Its happy instincts lead it straight on in the way of right. God never abandoned a loving heart to permanent perplexity or doubt. And so with our duties to man. When we love our neighbor, we cannot harm him; nay, not content with this negative benevolence, we render him, with spontaneous and unconstrained activity, all offices of tenderness and charity.

You have all heard of Lord Bacon's saying, "Knowledge is power." But perhaps you have not all heard of another saying of Bacon's, "The angels fell by striving to be like God in power; Adam, by striving to be like God in knowledge; but neither angels nor men ever transgressed, or shall transgress, by striving to be like God in love." Ah! love is better than power, and better than knowledge, because "God is love." But by choosing the better part, we get the lesser also. Choose the lesser, and you shall lose the whole. If there be knowledge, it shall vanish away; but love never faileth. The ambition for knowledge or for power, instead of love, has been

the curse of Christian men, of churches, and of nations. But for this sad, Satanic ambition, there had been no Paradise lost; but for it, after Christ had opened the way for man to a Paradise regained, there had been none of the ages of darkness, sin, and sorrow, that take the place of what should have been the ages of a pure, undoubting faith. In the first Christian centuries, the Gnostics fell by seeking knowledge, instead of love; the scholastics in the middle age erred in the same way; the Pantheists of our time are their modern followers.

Let us take warning. There is safety and strength only for those who "dwell in love." There is knowledge that shall last forever only for those that "dwell in love." There is power to overcome the world, and sin, and death, and hell, only for those that "dwell in love." There is salvation only for those that "dwell in love." For "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

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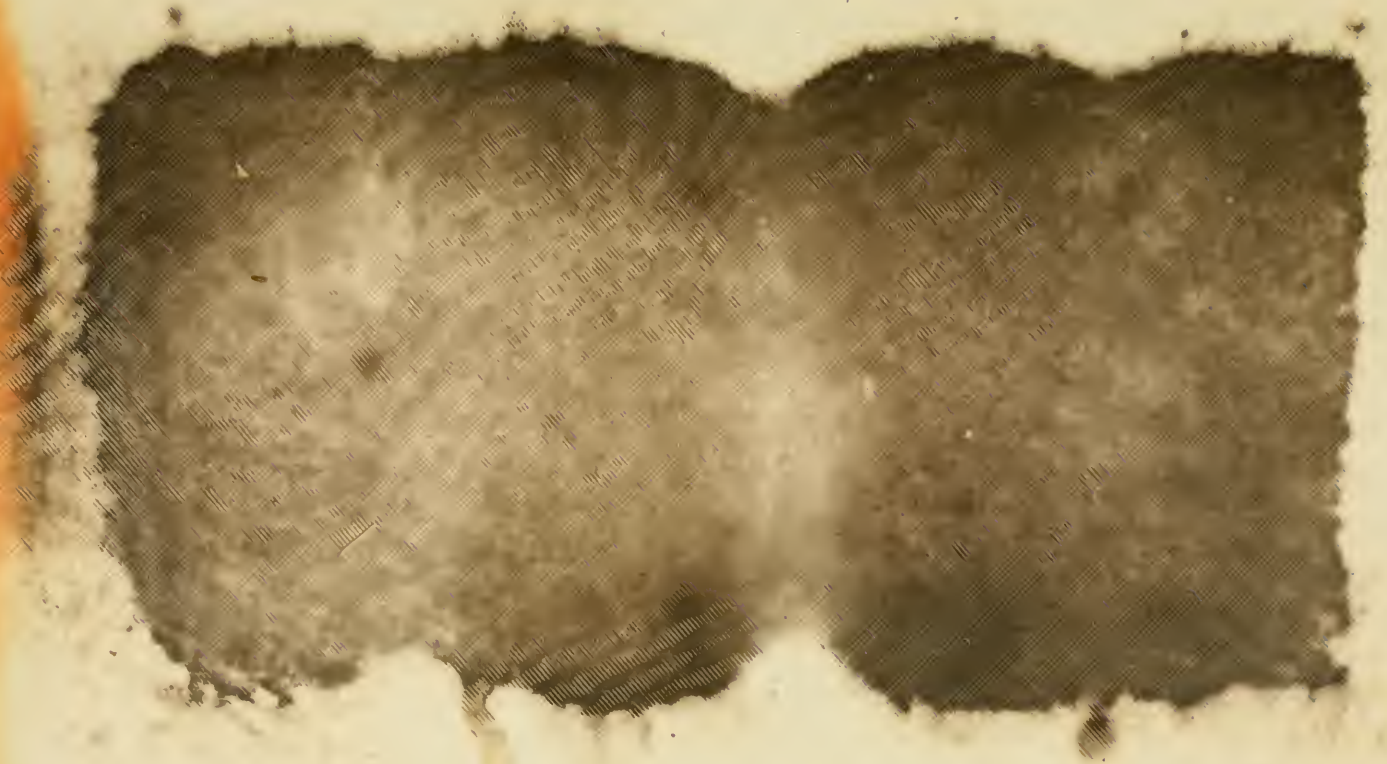

IN
Union With Christ
We Are One